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SOME ASPECTS OF INDIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

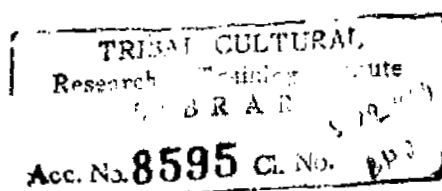


P. K. Bhowmick
Professor of Anthropology
CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY

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SOME ASPECTS OF INDIAN ANTHROPOLOGY



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To
my elder Brother
A. R. Bhowmick



BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

- Lodhas of West Bengal*
Occupational Mobility and Caste Structure in Bengal
Four Midnapur Villages
Socio-Cultural Profile of Frontier Bengal
Occultism in Fringe Bengal
Some Aspects of Indian Anthropology
Samaj O Sampradaya (Bengali)
Samaj Alekshya (Bengali)
Samaj Samiksha (Bengali)
Pragaitihasik Samskriti (Bengali)
Banglar Loka-utsav (Bengali)
Lodha : Ekti Upajati'r Nam (Bengali)
Upajati'r Katha (Bengali)

PREFACE

In late forties and early fifties I studied anthropology under Professor N. K. Bose, Prof. K. P. Chattopadhyay, Prof. T. C. Das, Prof. M. N. Basu, Prof. J. K. Bose. These great savants of the profession inspired me to use anthropological knowledge for human welfare. With their blessings I carried on fieldwork among a number of backward tribes and castes to understand their problems and to look for their possible solutions. I have also studied from the anthropological perspective certain socio-cultural situations in areas normally overlooked by conventional anthropology. From time to time I recorded my humble observations in the form of papers, seminar talks, etc. They attracted the attention of my co-professionals who advised and encouraged me for further work and with their good will and constructive criticism I have been able to build up some ideas in the field of Indian Anthropology. Since they are scattered over about three decades in journals and periodicals, some of which have long been withdrawn from circulation. I have tried to put them together in the form of a single volume in deference to the wishes of my well-meaning friends.

My efforts shall be amply rewarded if these rambling thoughts would initiate some young friends in the profession to come forward to use their knowledge for the welfare of their fellowmen.

I take this opportunity to thank Shri H. K. Rakshit, Director of the Anthropological Survey of India, Professor S. N. Ratha of the Sambalpur University, Dr. Swapan Kumar Bhattacharyya of the Calcutta University and Dr. A. Munirathnam Reddy of the S. V. University, Tirupati, A. P., for their suggestions and assistance.

I humbly dedicate this book to Sri Amulya Ratan Bhowmick, my elder brother, because of whom I could study anthropology from the days in my Intermediate classes in the Bangabasi College, Calcutta.

Red Building Two
University Campus
Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh
31. 3. 79

P. K. Bhowmick
Visiting Professor (U. G.C.)
Dept. of Social Anthropology
S. V. University

CONTENTS

1. Economy and Society of the Primitive People of India	1
2. Some aspects of Tribal Transformation in India	20
3. Re-tribalization—Communities in Search of a new Identity	27
4. Lodhas of West Bengal	36
5. Physical affinity of the Lodhas of Midnapur	49
6. Clan and Lineage among the Mundas of West Bengal	70
7. Emerging Problems of the Scheduled Caste in West Bengal	88
8. Living conditions and Social disabilities of the Sweepers at Tamluk in Midnapur of West Bengal	95
9. Role of Social Scientist in Development Plans	106
10. Problems of Denotified Tribes	117
11. Shifting cultivation : A plea for new strategies	134
12. Education of the under privileged—A suggestion	144
13. Welfare measures and Basic Resistances to their Implementation	152
14. Regional Strategy for the Development of the Tribal communities	162
15. The Social Sub-System of A Frontier Region in India—A micro-study of conflicts and integration of diverse Ethnic groups	
16. <i>Cultural continuity in Social Economic change— A study in Religious complexes in the Rurban setting</i>	196
17. Concepts of Disease and Disease Gods and Goddesses	212
18. Women in nursery Rhymes of Border Bengal	229
19. Caste and conflict in a Bengal Village	240
20. The Jharkhand movement in West Bengal— A Preliminary study	271
21. A Political Anthropological view of the West Bengal State Polls in 1977 (with R. K. Gupta)	249



ECONOMY AND SOCIETY OF THE PRIMITIVE PEOPLE OF INDIA¹

The term "primitive" is usually used to indicate the tribals or the aboriginals, i.e. the "Adivasis", as they are considered, as autochthonous or early settlers. Sometimes they are described as *Vanyajati*, *Upajati* or *Girijana*. Being the foremost settlers, naturally the earliest forms of civilisation are attributed to the ancestors of these groups. These groups are generally found to live in unhealthy jungle-covered rugged tracts of this country, mostly inaccessible to other people and in the zones of less interaction. In general, they lack satisfactory progress in comparison to others. Hence they are designated as the weaker sections of the populace of this country. From the administrative point of view, i.e. for convenience of administration even before and after independence, these people were scheduled as tribals and thus demarcated from the rest of the people of India. In the Indian Constitution* special provisions have been made for these weaker sections to give them proper financial assistance and to protect them from social disabilities by giving them certain constitutional safeguards.

1 Originally published in the CULTURAL FORUM, Special Education Number, Delhi, 1968. The essay has been revised and altered in several important respects.

*Part XVI, Section 342: (1) The President may with respect to any State (or Union Territory) and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor, by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of, or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes in relation to the State (or Union Territory, as the case may be). (2) The Parliament may by law include in or exclude from the list of Scheduled Tribes specified in a notification.

2 *Indian Anthropology*

They belong to variegated cultural groups as well as ethnic stocks and, in many cases, it is very difficult to distinguish a tribe from a common rural inhabitant of India in a limited ecological setting. At present, there is no valid, scientific definition applicable to a tribe, and, even in the Constitution, the term is not defined. Dictionary of Anthropology describes tribe as "A social group, usually with a definite area, dialect cultural homogeneity, and unifying social organisation. It may include several sub-groups as sibs or villages" etc. Kroeber (1948) conceives tribe as small isolated and close knit society where both societal and cultural aspects are largely organised on the basis of kinship. But Piddington in his recent writing (1960) looks upon illiteracy, societal organisation on basis of small social groupings, low level of technological achievement, social relationship being based on kinship and locality primarily and lack of economic specialisation and overlapping of social groups as primary characteristics of primitive communities. However, these autochthonous groups of people are presumed as earlier settlers or the indigenous population of this sub-continent, though they had to traverse a long path through prehistoric and historic periods with many bitter experiences of stresses and strains for social stability. And, in the course of such travels and shifting for security following clashes with other groups, the cultures of these groups have been transformed to a considerable extent, or blended according to the demands of the situation or circumstantial exigencies. As a result, the present day cultures of these groups bear such mark of incorporation into the core of their cultural matrix. Thus it can be said that the tribes are not permanent crystalline structures belonging to one 'Stage' of historical or social development. The consideration of the Government for determination of a tribe and the description of the academicians do not tally with each other. A disharmonious categorisation is found to prevail with regard to the definition of a tribe. A same group of people is not considered as a Scheduled Tribe in all the States of India. Criteria by which a tribe is classified differ from State to State, a few examples of which are quoted below.

The Government of Assam describes a group of people as a tribe who are of Mongolian descent and among whom a typical social organisation is found; the Government of Madhya Pradesh as having a tribal origin and living in a forest area, the Government of Orissa, as of Pre-Dravidian or Mongolian origin; the Government of West Bengal—when they are simply of tribal origin; Government of Tamil Nadu, as following primitive and tribal way of life and whose residence is less easily accessible on the hills, or in the remote areas or in the interior of the forests, etc. Many States think that primitive ways of living or clinging to the animistic type of religion are the criteria to schedule a group of people as tribe. In this connection it may be mentioned here that the Bhumijes of West Bengal except Purulia considered as a scheduled tribe, but the same group of people living in Bihar State not considered as a scheduled tribe. As a result, the Bhumijes living in the district of Purulia, West Bengal were not regarded as scheduled tribe, as this district is a transferred area from Bihar. Physically and culturally, however, the Bhumijes of these two States do not differ from each other. However, it can be stated that the tribals, in general, have some common cultural patterns or ways of living though similarity of traits in material culture largely depends on ecology and geo-physical conditions. Lack of specialisation i.e. least functional interdependence can be considered as a basic criterion to differentiate a tribe from the rest of the people. Again: the tribal communities are found to cling to a crude economic state or organisation i.e. primitiveness in technology, and this may be considered as one of the important criteria. They must have a common language or dialect of their own and this enables them to forge the group together. Homogeneity or lack of social stratification is another characteristic feature of tribal attribute. Prolonged isolation or being engulfed by the dominance of people of better economic status may, in many cases, dilute the linguistic oneness as in the case of the Lodhas of Midnapur or the Oraons of Sundarban in West Bengal. But in their traditional songs and incantations, their original vocabulary can easily be indentified. They must participate in rites and rituals which are meaning-

4 *Indian Anthropology*

fully understandable to them alone and in return these rituals demand certain responses from the individuals of the said group. These rituals convey some impregnated ideas which are interlaced inextricably with their cultural pattern. The group consciousness or ethnocentrism may be counted as another criterion to differentiate a tribal group from others. Tribalism or the concept of sharp group mentality generate oneness in dealing with others, specially in taking vengeance for some common cause, against an offending individual or group. This tribalism is again reinforced by endogamous principles, governed by a strong communal organisation, reflected in the form of tribal or caste panchayat, though a good many caste groups also behave in the way in a specific situation.

This can be illustrated in Bailey's (1961) illustrated study in Orissa where he considered the politico-economic activity in discussing tribe. To him 'tribe'—a segmentary system as opposed to 'organic' system of the caste. Sinha is of opinion to consider a tribe as a system of social relationships as well as set of mind and cultural traditions both characterized basically by isolation and lack of stratification.

Though Dr. D. N. Majumdar (1944) defined tribe as collection of families, or group of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed well assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations. Prof. T. C. Das (1953), on the other hand, considers a tribe generally has a common name, a common habitat, a common language, a common culture and a feeling of unity among its members as against members of other tribes. However, whatever definition is used for the 'tribe', it can be said that due to various factors, and even at different contact zones, these criteria may not be quite suitable. At the same time, a good many tribal communities, due to prolonged association with dominant castes or economically better off group, have been considerably acculturated and thus they are more or less in a detribalized condi-

tion. A good number of little-known communities having many basic criteria of a tribe, are not yet found to have been scheduled, as such. This is obviously due to the failure of the people concerned in making a proper representation to the authorities concerned.

Under Section 6 (1) of the Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976 the Scheduled Tribe constituted 7.5 percent of the population and numbered 4.12 crores. Though the tribal people are scattered throughout the Indian Union in a variable degree, having different economic pursuits, yet they are mainly concentrated at some border zones like—(1) North and north-eastern zone comprising sub-Himalayan mountainous region including east of the Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, northern Uttar Pradesh and Assam and Arunachal which merge imperceptibly with Burma. The dominating tribals in Assam and Arunachal are Aka, Dafia, Miri, Apatani on the west of Subansiri. In the Dehong Valley, tribes like Padam, Minyong are notable. Naga groups like Konyak, Rengma, Sengma, Ao, Angami, Lhota, Phom, Chang and Kabui are also dominating having a distinctive cultural pattern. In Manipur, Kuki groups including Lushai, Lakher, Chins and at Shillong and its vicinity, Khasis, Garos and Kacharis, and near Darjeeling Lepcha, Bhotia, Rabha, etc. are found to live in demarcated habitats. In U.P. tribals like, Tharus, Bhots, Khasa, Korwa, Binjai, Cheri, etc. are notable.

(2) In the central or middle zone comprising the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, southern Uttar Pradesh, northern Bombay, northern Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, the important tribes are Savar, Gadaba, Juang, Kharria, Khond, Bhumij, Bhuiya, Munda, Santal, Lodha, Bathuri, Oraon, Mahali, Ho, Birhor, Kol, Bhil, Gond, Maler, Asura, Baiga, Pradhan, Agaria and Hill Maria and Bisonhorn Maria.

(3) The southern zone consisting of Kerala, Tamilnadu and Andhra States, is inhabited mainly by tribes like Chenchu, Toda, Badaga, Kota, Panian, Irula, Kurumba, Kadar, Kanikar, Mal-vadan and Mala-Karavan etc.

6 Indian Anthropology

Besides these three broader zones, there are other areas like Lakshadweep, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands where the Andamanese, Jarawa, Onge—isolated tribes live.

Tribals Through Centuries

References to tribes in many Epic literatures and *Puranas* are also available which shows that these aboriginal folk came in contact with a group of people, better equipped in technology and higher in status, at that time. These forest-dwelling communities were described as *savara*, *dasyus*, *nishādas* and even as *rākhasas*. They had resisted the Aryan invasion. But in course of time, these people, due to varied interactional situations, have had to assimilate most of the major Hindu traditions and thus reoriented their manners and customs. During the Hindu and the Muslim periods they had, more or less, good relations with other sections of the population as we find from past evidences. During the British period, the tribal communities of our country had to face many conflicting situations of a tensional nature, as a good many money-lenders, usurers, etc. gradually got across to the tribal regions and tried to exploit them in various ways. Though the British tried to protect them by maintaining a policy of isolation, yet in course of time, the tribes in general, began to experience more difficulties. Encroachment on forest by other groups led to the cessation of the rights of sole occupation. The same thing happened with regard to forest produce, so long enjoyed by the tribals. Contractors began to carry away a part of the forest produce. The land settlement policy also affected very seriously the system of tribal ownership. Oppression of the usurers and money-lenders, rapacious enhancement of the rent by landlords, etc. ultimately led to a series of tribal disturbances and uprisings. Thus we find the Malpaharia rising (1772), Chuar or paik rebellion in Bengal (1787:1830), Kol insurrection (1831-32), Khond rising (1846), Santhal rebellion (1855), unrest in Dhanbad (1869-70), Sardari Agitation (1887), Birsa movement (1895), Tana Bhagat movement (1914) etc. After independence also, we faced agitations by the tribals like

those by Nagas, Mizos and even in central India, the tribals are found to be in a restless condition bent on achieving some of their demands. There are many other situations which not only fomented the outbursts of the tribals, but also affected the fabric of national integration, though in different degrees. As a result new tribal image is emerging.

Classification

Attempts have been made to classify the tribals into various categories. Dr. Verrier Elwin (1943) classified the tribal population into four classes :

(1) Wilder aborigines who are still in the most primitive stage, shy to strangers, all represented by Hill Maria, Juang, Gadaba, Bondo, etc. (2) Aborigines attached to solitude and to ancient traditions, performing axe-cultivation represented by Bison Hill Maria and Baigas, etc. (3) Aborigines having external contact which impaired their tribal culture and social organisation represented by Hos, etc. (4) The aristocratic tribals represented by Bhil, Naga Chieftains, Raj Gonds and Korku noblemen and wealthy Munda, Santal, Oraon and Khasi leaders, who are highly cultured and live in modern style.

An expert committee, headed by Dr. Jivraj Mehta (1950) classified the tribals into following categories :

- (1) Tribals who confine themselves to original forest habits and are still distinctive in their pattern of life. These are to be called Tribal Communities.
- (2) Tribals who have more or less settled down in rural areas taking to primitive agriculture and other allied occupations. These are to be called semi-tribal communities.
- (3) Tribals who have migrated to urban and semi-urban areas and are engaged in 'civilised' occupations, in industries and other vocations and have almost been assimilated in the general population of the country. These are to be called Acculturated Tribals.
- (4) Tribals who have been totally assimilated.

On the basis of economy a classification was made by Majumdar and Madan (1956). These are as follows :

8 Indian Anthropology

- (1) Food-gathering economy—the Birhor, the Kharia, the Chenchu, the Malapantaram, the Kadar, the Paliyan, the Yanadi and the Kuruimba. They collect fruits, edible roots and honey from the forest. All are hunters and fishermen.
- (2) Agriculture—The Oraon, the Munda, the Bhil, the Santal, the Majhwar, the Kharwar, the Baiga, the Korwa, the Gond, the Ho and the Assam tribes, depending mainly on agriculture.
- (3) Shifting axe-cultivation—represented by the Naga (*Jhum*), the Bhuiya (*Dahi, Koman*), Maria of Baster (*Penda*), the Khond (*Padu*), the Baiga (*Bewar*).
- (4) Hinduised tribal groups—Bhumij or Gond (distillation of spirit), Gond (metal-work, weaving, cane work). The Agaria (iron-smelters), the Mahali, Irula (bamboo-mats, baskets, plough shares and wheels) also belong to this group.
- (5) Pastoralism—Toda of Nilgiri, Bhot of Almora.
- (6) Industrial labour—The Santal, the Khond, the Gond, the Ho, etc. engaged in industrial labour work in town, factories and workshop, etc.

Prof. T. C. Das (1957) has made the following classification :

- (1) Timid, shy nomadic food-gatherers and pastoralists living on hills and in forests and least affected by the culture of the plains-people who are always avoided out of suspicion. Struggle for existence is very hard. Crafts are very crude and merely minister to the animal needs of the group. Though music and dancing are known, yet there are few occasions to indulge in them. The Birhors of Ranchi, Juangs of Keonjhar and Pal-Lahara, wild Kharia of Dhalbhum and Hill Bhuiyas of Orissa.
- (2) Healthy, vigorous, optimistic shifting cultivators of hill-slopes. Economic self-sufficiency is based on personal labour and group capital in the shape of village land.

Different Naga tribes—Aos, Angamis, Rongmas, Tanghuls, Maos, Marmas, etc., Thado Kukis, Garos.

- (3) Morose plough-cultivators on the plateaux and at the foot of the hills with scattered colonies of non-tribal immigrants settled among them. Mundas, Oraons, Hos, etc. of Chotanagpur, Kabui Nagas of Imphal Valley, Gonds of Madhya Pradesh, Santals of West Bengal.
- (4) Hinduised tribal groups : Bhumijs of Manbhum and Bankura, Bhuiyas of Orissa, Koras of West Bengal—engaged in towns, factories and workshops, etc.
- (5) Fully assimilated tribal groups the Meithies of Manipur, Rajbhansis of North Bengal, Ahoms of Assam, Raj-Gonds of Madhya Pradesh—occupying a fairly high social status in the Hindu caste system—income from land and service, etc.

Different anthropologists have tried to classify the tribals into distinctive groups. S. C. Dube (1960) has tried to categorise the tribal population of India into five distinctive fold, more or less based on Elwin's classification. Ray Burman (1971) on the other hand has tried to group the tribal communities into four groups considering nature of slant to the Hindu social order. A few tribes incorporated Hindu style of life whereas the others negatively oriented toward the Hindu social order.

Prof. Vidyarthi (1977) very recently proposes to classify the tribals of India on the basis of cultural affinity. According to him the tribes can be grouped into five cultural types.

(i) Forest-hunting type, Main economy of the tribe is hunting and food collection. They live in small groups in deep forests like the Jarawa, Birhor, Korowa, etc.

(ii) Hill cultivation type : Main economy is shifting hill cultivation. Though they settle in different areas but have more or less similar ecology. There may be different historical background for the tribes. Examples may be cited from the Kond, Gond, Kharia, and some north-eastern tribes.

(iii) Plain agriculture type : These tribes live in bigger villages and they predominantly depend on agriculture. Examples are the Santal, the Oraon, the Munda, Gond, Bhil, Mina, etc.

(iv) Simple Artisan and Folk Artist type : Tribals engaged in handicrafts and folk arts can be categorised into this type. Examples—the Karmalis, the Lohar, the Gādulia Lohar, the Mahalis, etc.

(v) Industrial and Urban workers : The tribals who have accepted industrial and urban profession. A good number of tribal communities left their own habitats and accepted these professions either permanently or seasonally.

Economic Structure

It is an undeniable fact that economic conditions with their ecological setting determine the culture of a particular group of people. Gradual changes in economic pursuits bring corresponding changes in the social system and allow the people to interact at varied degrees in the social and economic sphere. So wherever we find the forces of detribalisation, Hinduisation and urbanization operating, we generally associate these with different contact situations. By analysing the nature of the habitats of the present day so-called primitive people, we can say that a vast number of these people cling to their old forest economy by utilising various kinds of edible roots and tubers, leaves, honey and wild games. Forest provides them with fuel to keep warm in winter, and shady leaves of the trees to protect them from the scorching rays of the sun in summer. As many of their psycho-emotional or religious questions are solved from the forest, we find a good many of their gods and goddesses have their abode in the forests and thus they are linked closely with the forest. Even in the deforested areas, tribal groups are found to keep a few virgin trees uncut and consider these as the sacred groves of their deities. Thus forest plays an important role in the life of the tribals. This forest environment was undoubtedly preferred and enjoyed by the tribals from the hoary past. But various changes in the forest policies of the Government, from time to time, displaced the tribals from their traditional grooves, and in course of time, brought about a total disruption of their societies. If we consider the case of the Lodhas who are dubbed as an ex-criminal tribe of West Bengal, it can be safely said that they

have developed the criminal propensities due to extreme sufferings resulting from their displacement from the forests, as a result of which they lost their livelihood. They were deprived of free access to the forest, due to a strict Government forest policy during the British administration in our country. In comparison to the total land area, we are also short in natural forests, because India (1952) had only 20 per cent of her land area under forest and this is very inadequate for our basic requirements. Besides, a good many tribals indulged in indiscriminate destruction of forests. Hence the Forest Department has imposed many restrictions on the utilisation of the forest products by the tribals. To maintain these people, however, arrangements have been made to allow them to use or to carry a headload of fuel at a very nominal cost. Besides, many small forest co-operatives have also been set up for the tribals and a number of forest villages have been established in which the tribals get easy employment facilities. But there are also the tribal labourers who are cheated by outside contractors. Therefore, a new outlook is now necessary on the part of the tribals, and the Forest Department to put a stop to the wasteful use of the forest. It has been observed that a very limited number of people can be supported in the forest, where they pursue the traditional productive system of food gathering economy. It has been estimated that collection of wild food and hunting could not support more than two or three people per square mile of inhabited territory.

Agriculture in different ways is practised by 90% of the total tribal population of our country. When people do not find any other employment, they revert to the land for any sort of production. The important crops that they raise consist of paddy and millets, which they produce in the very primitive way of broadcasting. Transplantation is practised only in rare cases. Thus in the hill slopes we find terrace cultivation and in many forest the slash and burn type of cultivation or shifting hill cultivation practised by the tribals. A record shows that 25,80,401 persons practise shifting hill cultivation in an area of 13,51,906 acres of land. A patch of forest is cleared, the fallen

trees and bushes are burnt to turn these into ashes, when dibbling or broadcasting is done depending on the natural rainfall. It has been estimated that about twenty to thirty persons can be supported per sq. mile by this means with regular supplementation of other food-collecting ways and hunting. Shifting hill cultivation is termed differently in different regions of our country. In Assam and Tripura it is known as '*Jhum*', '*Deppa*' in Bastar, *Khil* in the Himalayas, *Kumari* in Western Ghats, *Bewar* and *Dahia* in Madhya Pradesh, *Podu* in Andhra Pradesh, *Pama*, *Dahi*, *Koman* or *Bringa* in North Orissa. *Gundia* or *Dongarchas* in South Orissa, *Walra* in south-east Rajasthan. The Marias call it *Penda*. This practice undoubtedly destroys and damages the forest, causes soil erosion, destroys valuable trees and affects rainfall. So it is considered extremely harmful. This harmful practice of the tribals should be stopped but steps should be taken in such a way, that the tribals are introduced gradually to other pursuits without disturbing their psycho-emotional setting. It can be diverted in such a way that their co-operative spirit may be utilised for co-operative farming.

In practising plough cultivation the tribal people have to depend mainly on their traditional appliances but these are not adequate. Besides, they have been deprived of their land, in a majority of the cases, by outsiders by tricky ways. Most of the tribals are now landless and those who practise agriculture do not have the scope to be engaged in it throughout the year. Hence they face acute financial difficulties and they have frequently to borrow money from the traditional money-lenders at a very high rate of interest. These money-lenders resort to atrocious means to recover their dues.

A recent study of indebtedness in West Bengal discloses that there are a few categories of money-lenders who are known as *Madrasi*, *Khanka*, *Kapria*, etc. The *Madrasis* advance loans in the month of September to an individual for a sum of Rs. 7.50, and sell 500 gms. of spices to the loanee, which he must accept as a part of the loan. The price is fixed at Rs. 2.50 and is added to the original loan, which becomes Rs. 10.00 in total.

This has to be repaid in the month of January with an interest of Rs. 2·50, i.e. a total of Rs 12·50. The Khanka Mahajans also advance loans in the month of September with an interest of 10 paise per rupee per month to be realised later on. The Kapria Mahajans, i.e. cloth money-lenders allow the poor tribals to purchase cloth on loan during the Pujas or any other festival, specially at the time of *Paus Sankranti*. The price is exorbitant (a cloth having normal price of Rs. 7/- is sold at Rs. 10/- generally) and Rs. 1/- is to be paid to him by the loanee in each market day. Some other Panjabi Mahajans advance a loan of Rs. 10/- which is recovered at the rate of Rs. 1·25 per week in 10 weeks, i.e. Rs. 12·50 in all. Some local people also advance loans in the month of September—say, when they advance Rs. 15/-, it has to be repaid, in the form of a maund of paddy, in the month of January. When its price goes up to Rs. 25/- per maund. Such is the horrible picture of indebtedness and the extortion of the tribals in west Bengal.

Exploitation of agricultural labour like *Gothi*—a form of bonded-labour was prevalent in Orissa, in which case an individual is engaged by the employer for a small sum. In Madhya Pradesh a system of Mahidari (bonded-labour) was prevalent till some years ago. *Sagri*—a debt bondage-labour system prevailed in Rajasthan, under which an individual had to work until the loan was fully repaid by him, without any wage. Such was the economic condition of the tribals in many parts of India.

A good many tribals are still engaged in various forms of handicrafts. The Mahalis are found to live by basket-making. The Birhors prepare rope from the bark of trees. Some Konds are found to pursue cane-working. The Asuras or Agarias practise iron-smelting, the Maria Gonds subsist on distillation of spirits. The Tharus in addition to farming, make furniture, baskets and household implements. A good many Assam tribes prefer basketry as well as weaving and make cotton cloths dyed in indigenous vegetables for colouring. Now-a-days these handicrafts, because of their high quality, are warmly appreciated by many outsiders.

The Todas of South India mainly depend on the milk-products of their buffaloes, whereas the Bhots of Almora depend on cattle rearing.

It has been noticed that a good many of the tribals from different parts of India are found to be employed in plantations. They are generally Gonds, Konds, Santals, Oraons and the Mundas. The Oraons and the Mundas have migrated to lower Bengal as agricultural labourers to clear up the jungle areas and to bring these lands under cultivation. A good number of *Dhangars* of Calcutta Corporation are Oraons and now-a-days many tribals are employed at various projects like Durgapur, Hatia, Bokaro etc. A large number of them are found to be employed not only in the mines, but also in railway stations and on the tracks.

Thus the tribals of our country are now taking to new professions which are not traditional and these professions have brought them to inter-actional contact with other people. They are trying their utmost to adjust themselves to the changing situations and there is gradual change in their social system and their sense of values.

Social Organisation

It has been suggested that the primitive people of India constituted variegated cultural groups having distinctive social structures of their own. In every society we find units—with their outer frame work and *institutions* set with beliefs and customs *filling the intervening spaces of the framework and these keep the society in proper functioning*. The institution is defined as “established forms or conditions of procedures linked with group action”. Most of the tribal societies are based on patriarchate principles, in which descent is patrilineal, inheritance follows the male line, authority is vested in the hands of male persons, succession to office is confined to males and residence is patrilocal, i.e. after marriage the wife is brought to her husband's place and she stays there. The matriarchate tribes are also not rare. The typical example of this are the *Khasis of Assam*. The *Garo and Rabhas of West Bengal*

observe many features of the matriarchate society. In many tribal societies, specially among the Aimols, or the Gonds, we find the existence of a dual organisation, and their societies are divided into two exogamous halves, known as *moieties*. One of these groups is sometimes regarded as superior, while the other is considered as inferior. Amongst the Aimol the moiety is again divided into the *phratries* and each *phratry* into two clans. But in the case of the Gonds these *moieties* are grouped into a few *totemistic* clans. The moiety, *phratry* or the clans play quite an important role in regulating marriage in the tribal societies. Amongst the Aimol we also find that their clan is divided into a few lineages and these again into a number of families. These families, clan, moiety are the social units. Amongst the Dimasa both patrilineal and matrilineal systems of descent are in vogue—the male children reckon their descent through their father's line and female through their mother's line. The Andamanese were grouped into a few local groups consisting of a few families. They have no clan organisation. We also meet such grouping amongst Birhors based on the nature of aggregation. The village, local groups, neighbourhood, etc. can also be considered as political units. Besides these, we also find among many tribals, specially among the Oraons, a *Dhumkuria* organisation, popularly described as "bachelors' dormitory system". Here the bachelors of the Oraon society are grouped into three categories, e.g., the *Puna Jokhar* (novices), the *Majturia Jokhar* (intermediate group) and *Koha Jokhar* (oldest group). Each group has to do some specific types of duties and they have a leader who has to organise *jatra*, dances and voluntary services with the villagers who are considered to have parts in these. According to S. C. Roy—"It is an effective economic organisation for the purposes of food quest, a useful seminary for the training of youngmen in their social and other duties and an institution for magico-religious observances calculated to secure success in hunting and to augment the procreative power of youngmen so as to increase the number of hunters in the tribe". The Ao Nagas of Assam have an elaborate age-group system having seven grades, and each grade has some well-defined duties

and privileges. The bachelors have to stay in a house known as "Morung". These bachelors' organisation are generally considered as educational units, and these promote the process of socialisation.

Of all important social institutions, marriage is the most important aspect and more or less, universal, though we sometimes find variations like celibacy. Some *Ho* women are found to be unmarried due to various socio-economic factors. However, the rules of *exogamy* and *endogamy* are considered to be the laws of marriage, which are prevalent in many tribal societies. Most of the clans of the tribals are *exogamous* in nature as the clan members consider themselves as brothers and sisters. So marriage is forbidden among them. Amongst the *Bhanja Purans* of Orissa, the marriage takes place in the same clan avoiding the surnames. Amongst the *Mundas* of West Bengal, marriage also takes place in the same clan. They avoid lineages and sublineages like *Vansha* and *Patabhais*, who claim a close blood relationship.

However, selection of mate is done in many cases through premarital sexual indulgence as practised amongst the *Gonds* through their *Ghotul* organisation or the *Dhumkuria* organisation of the *Oraons*. The *Garos* also have their *Nokpante*. It has been described by Dr. Elwin that the bachelors and maidens of the *Gonds* pass the night in the dormitory where they pair according to their choice. Except for the *exogamous* or *endogamous* rules, the rules of preferential mating are in existence in which the prospective spouses are more or less fixed beforehand, and their marriage is *obligatory*. The various forms of preferential mating are either *F. S. D.* type (father's sister's daughter) marriage, or it may be of *M. B. D.* (mother's brother's daughter) type, respectively. The *Todas* practise both *F. S. D.* and *M. B. D.* types of marriage. Such is the case with the *Gonds*. The *Garos* prefer to *F. S. D.* type of marriage. Among the *Chiru Kuki* we find a marriage-class. Such is the case of the *Purums*.

Amongst the many tribal societies of India we find *levirate*, i.e. the widow of the elder brother is remarried by the younger

brother. Sororate is marriage with wife's sister and it is not uncommon. Besides these, there are other anomalous types of marriage such as, a Garo is found to marry his widowed mother-in-law simply on grounds of inheritance of property. Lakheris marry a step mother and sometimes the widow of the son. The ways of acquiring a mate in tribal society are varied. There is marriage by capture, as practised by the Santals, Hos, and the Mundas. Vermilion marks are put on the forehead of the girls by the boys forcibly and this constitutes formal marriage. Marriage by service is another way of getting a wife, in which case the prospective bridegroom has to work in the house of his prospective father-in-law. The duration of such voluntary service varies. This is prevalent amongst the Kuki tribes of Assam and the Bhils. Marriage by elopement is another way of getting a wife, in which case a boy having fallen in love with a girl wants to marry her, but the guardians do not favour it and he has no other alternative than to elope. After a few years they come back and offer a formal fee to the village council for condoning their offence and to seek approval of their marriage. Marriage by intrusion is another way of getting a wife, in which case a girl stealthily enters into the house of a boy of her choice and stays there in spite of receiving all sorts of ill-treatment from the mother of the boy.

A good many tribal communities are monogamous though polygamy is not uncommon among them. Amongst many agrarian tribals, polygamy is also prevalent. The Todas practise a peculiar system of polyandry, in which case, a woman is married by several persons. Polyandry may be of the non-fraternal type, where husbands are not brothers. Amongst the Khasa, fraternal polyandry is quite popular. The Todas practise a ceremony by which social fatherhood is determined in such cases.

Conclusion

It is therefore seen that under the impact of compelling circumstances, the nature of the tribal society and their economy has changed from their traditional patterns to a mixed type, and

18 *Indian Anthropology*

the agrarian texture is gradually tilting towards industrial economy, by which they are now generally benefitted. This has been due to their coming into close contact with other groups of people, who are socially and economically advanced. But such interaction has not totally eliminated some of their traditional practices, customs and beliefs, and in that sense they are still maintaining some of their basic traditions. This bigotry still keeps them a largely backward people. They need planned and sustained help from the Government to stabilise their society and to raise their standard of living to make them a happy and contented group of people, who could defend and contribute to the welfare of this country.

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More than 4.12 crores of people in India belong to tribal groups who have different cultural levels and languages. They are, more or less, concentrated in certain specific areas of this country, among whom those living in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Gujrat, Rajasthan, Assam, Maharashtra, West Bengal, and Andhra Pradesh constitute the largest percentage. These tribal communities, having different cultural traditions, ideas, beliefs and philosophy, and subject to various types of interaction with the neighbouring communities, present a set of variegated problems to a general observer or to the administrator.

New Acculturation Process

A small fraction of the tribal people still cling to very primitive types of economy like food gathering, supplemented by casual hunting, fishing, etc., while some have adopted a pastoral economy. Some of the tribes still practise a very primitive type of cultivation, namely, slash and burn type of agriculture, while others have taken to the wet cultivation. Cottage industries like rope or basket making, smithy, weaving, etc. are not unknown to the tribes. These variegated economic activities, coupled with their interaction with various ethnic groups, have generated a sort of new acculturation process which has become more pronounced in recent times. Besides, variability in their mode of living, adjustment to the environments and ecological settings due to cultural impact, and transport and trading facilities created in the tribal zones of late, the spread of education and of democratic ideas, etc. have together helped

1 Originally published in the Khadi Gramodyog (Jan 1968) Bombay. This is a revised version of the original article.

to develop varied transformations in their traditional cultural setting.

References to tribes in the *puranas* or *epic* literature are not rare where the forest-dwelling communities have been designated as *sabaras*, *dasyus*, etc. These communities had their own ways of living. Though they were nearly self-sufficient, yet they had some specific needs which brought them into contact with higher societies or with the ruling class. This prolonged contact, however did not disturb their ways of living very much, and, in course of time, Hindu ideas, rituals, beliefs and philosophy impregnated with their traditional ideas and philosophy, because the Brahmanical influence was not aggressive and did not jeopardize the normal ways of living of these people. As a result, we now find many of the Hindu festivals and rituals inextricably mixed up with the tribal forms, while they are observed both by the tribes and the neighbouring caste Hindus. It is now very difficult to disentangle one from the other. Besides, various popular social and religious festivals of the Hindus, with their immediate human appeal, offered an attraction to the tribal people and their gradual absorption in the greater Hindu fold became quite pronounced. This, in turn gave them a sense of security and self-satisfaction. So, discontent due to irregular cultural accommodation or absorption was very rare.

Anthropologists like Prof. N. K. Bose have analysed in detail this Hindu Method of tribal absorption. The rigid division of labour and occupational specialisation prevented one group in the caste system specialised in a particular occupation from intruding the specialisations which were the preserves of other caste groups. The tribals found, therefore, in the caste system some kind of economic security. If a tribal group entered into the caste fold and could find some occupation for them (in many cases they followed their original tribal craft), this occupation remained totally reserved for the group. It did not have to face competition from any other group. This non-competitive productive system provided another advantage, in the form of interdependence of different groups. The whole system was such as even the highest group was in some

22 Indian Anthropology

way or other depended on the lowest group and the latter thus was assured of a return for its service. One important fact related to this has not been adequately considered by the anthropologists. The ethos of occupational specialisation and monopoly and the accompanying sense of hierarchy permeated even to those tribals who refused or failed to embrace the caste system of the Hindus. One finds that a tribe has disintegrated and occupational specialisation has paved the way for that. One may take the example of the Mahalis. 'Maha' means bamboo and the *Mahalis* constitute a tribe which has specialised in of basket and other articles out of bamboos. The array of similarities between the Santals and the Mahalis is impressive. But the Mahalis have a separate identity at present and one of the ways of maintaining that lies in occupational specialisation. In the same way the *Koras* (kare or kara means small, Santals and others consider the Koras as inferior to them.) are engaged in earthwork or similar kinds of work which does not require any skill. Thus the tribals have unwittingly emulated the values and deals of the Hindu society and thus have been drawn nearer the Hindu social system.

We find a large number of tribal derivatives like, the: *Rajbanshi*, the *Bhumij*, the *Lodha*, etc. have already been absorbed into or are in the process of assimilation into the greater Hindu fold, so much so, that in some cases they have even forgotten their own language.

During the Mohammedan rule in India, there were instances of the tribal people like the *Bhils* fighting along with the Hindus against the Mughals. Besides, the concept of administration by kings, assisted by a *darbar* and other office bearers, is in vogue amongst many primitive people of central India and Assam. While the view above presents a picture of a society governed by the value of consensus, the anthropologists of the conflict school would immediately point out the series of conflicts that through the ages have characterized the relations between the tribals and non-tribals of this country. And it is a fact that the encounters between the tribals with their primitive technology and the non-tribals having an improved technology have

resulted into an unending series of woes and sufferings for the former. The tribals have in many particular situations fallen a prey to oppression and exploitation by the more powerful and cunning non-tribals. A feeling and relation of hostility between the tribals and non-tribals has been the natural consequence. This process has been accentuated during the British rule in India.

During British Rule

During the early part of the British administration in Bengal there were *paiks* or country soldiers, who were maintained by the Rajas or zemindars. Most of them were recruited from the tribal groups, and were given settlement and cultivable land in lieu of their services. Abolition of these *paikan* lands by the British caused a serious rebellion which is known as *chuar* or *paik* rebellion.

British rule in India, maintained a policy of isolation for the tribes, in general, but in actual case, it could not be completely enforced. There were Christian missionaries who made mass conversion of the tribals, after the latter were given considerable economic assistance and educational facilities. Besides the missionaries, there were zemindars also. They exploited the tribal people. The British rulers used to support their henchmen, and the zemindars acted as their agents, and so their mischievous activities were never restrained as also those few powerful neighbours who co-operated with them. Instead they used to get protection, if there was any trouble for their misdeeds.

British rule in India had to face many agitations as well as rebellions of the tribals in many parts of British India like the *chuar* or *paik* rebellion (1793-1816), the Santal insurrection (1855) and the Sardari agitation against compulsory free labour and illegal enhancement of rent by the landlords. This tempted the tribals to embrace Christianity for fear of exploitation of this type, as Christians were more or less exempt from such oppression in those days. Besides, there were Birsa movement in 1895, under the leadership of Birsa Munda, and Tana Bhagat movement (1914) of the Oraons. These clearly show the restless conditions of the tribals during the British

educated Christians identify themselves as upper class of the same tribe, and try to unite the rest of their tribal brethren into a compact group. Some of them are demanding a separate homeland of their own, in which, their nativistic culture would not face any opposition in the present democratic set-up of the country. Very recently, some educated *Santals* organised a society named, 'Adivasi Mahasabha' for the overall betterment of the *Santal* community in particular and other tribes in general.

Imitating the *Santals* of the district a few young educated *Mundas* of the district have very recently formed a registered society named 'West Bengal Munda Sevak Samaj' in the same manner. This year in the open session of this *Munda* organisation, they discussed various problems and passed a resolution asking for some of the *Mundas* being represented in the Tribal Advisory Council of the Government of West Bengal.

Thus a tendency to form one compact group has been noticed. One peculiar thing is that such organisations encourage tribal drama, songs and dances and even in many cases they indulge in drinking at the end of the functional mode of enjoyment. Thus a strong feeling of ethnocentrism has developed in course of the conferences. Although tribal welfare is our national duty, this has not been achieved in any appreciable measure.

In the democratic set-up of India each and every person must fight for and preserve national solidarity, as well as work for the welfare of the individuals and communities. In the case of the *Lodhas*, *Bhumijis* and *Rajbanshis*, etc., they have been so largely articulated into the regional social setting that a separate land for them or for the normal growth of their culture is not felt necessary at all. Prolonged interaction with the Hindus and their gradual assimilation with the Hindu fold have minimized the group distance almost to the point of non-existence, whereas, in the case of others, it has widened, leading to a threat to national solidarity. This is the crux of the problem, which we are facing in regard to the tribal population of the country at the moment, which calls for a new outlook and approach.

3. RETRIBALIZATION—COMMUNITIES IN SEARCH OF A NEW IDENTITY¹

I

INDIA is known as a sub-continent. It is correct not only from the geographical point of view, but from the cultural point of view also. India is a land of numerous ethnic groups, each with its own socio-cultural system or sub-system, each varying from the other in many significant ways. Naturally India has always remained an enigma for the anthropologists—as myriad social processes ceaselessly flow here. Stress and strain in the relationship between one group and another have been a recurrent phenomenon here. It is perceived not only among the different groups bound by the Caste System—an offshoot of Aryan culture—but also between the caste-bound Hindu society and the small communities of tribals of India.

The tribes belong to variegated cultural groups as well as ethnic stocks and, in many cases, it is very difficult to distinguish a tribal from a common rural inhabitant of India in a particular ecological setting. At present, there is no valid, scientific definition applicable to a tribe, and even in the Constitution of India, where one would find a host of safeguards protecting the interests of the tribes, the term has not been precisely defined. Dictionary of Anthropology (ed. Charles Winick : 1957) describes 'tribe' as "A social group, usually with a definite area, dialect, cultural homogeneity, and unifying social organisation. It may include several sub-groups as the sibs or villages, etc."

However, these autochthonous groups of people are presumed as earlier settlers or the indigenous population of this sub-continent though they had to traverse a long path through pre-historic and historic periods with many bitter experiences.

1. Originally Published in *Man and Life*, Vol. I, 1975, Calcutta.

of stresses and strains for social stability. And in course of their movement from one place to another in search of security, these groups came into conflict with one another, and their respective cultures underwent much transformation one culture incorporating some elements of another culture. As a result, the present-day cultures of these groups bear the mark of such incorporation into the core of their cultural matrix. The criteria relied upon by the Government in determining whether a group is a tribe, and those used by the academicians, do not tally with each other. Thus a disharmonious categorisation is found to prevail with regard to the definition of a tribe.

The same group of people may be considered a Scheduled Tribe in one 'State' and is not considered to be so in a different State. Instances are galore. We may give here only one example. The Bhumijes of West Bengal are not considered a Scheduled Tribe, whereas the Bhumijes living in the adjoining State of Bihar are regarded as a Scheduled Tribe. What is more interesting, the Bhumijes living in the district of Purulia of West Bengal are treated as tribals, since this district comprises the area transferred to West Bengal, in the recent past, from Bihar. However, physically and culturally the Bhumijes of these two States or the Bhumijes of Purulia and those of other districts of West Bengal do not differ from each other.

Nevertheless, it may be said that the tribes in general have a few common cultural patterns of ways of living though similarity of traits in material culture largely depends on ecology and geo-physical conditions. Lack of specialisation can be considered as a basic criterion to differentiate a tribe from the rest of the people. Tribal societies are far less stratified than the caste-bound Hindu society. Again, the tribal communities are found to cling to crude economic state or organisation and it may be considered as an important criterion. Close kin-relationship marks the life of the tribals. Each tribe has its own dialect or language. Of constant interaction with the dominant and advanced groups may force many of these groups to modify their dialect or language, e.g. the Lodhas of

West Bengal or the Oraons of Sundarbans in West Bengal. But in their traditional songs and incantations, their original vocabulary can easily be identified. Thus, a tribe is a group of people which maintains its separate cultural identity along with its typical social relationship depending on close kin-relationships and an undifferentiated economic organisation utilising very primitive or crude technology and its own dialect as well as, belief-system relating to nature and supernaturals.

The tribals of India are found to be distributed over three important zones: North-east Frontier Zone, Central or Middle Zone, and Southern Zone. Here we shall try to analyse a few aspects of the life of the tribes in Central India, particularly those lying in the border of Orissa, Bihar and Bengal, the eastern States of India.

II

If we look at history, we find that not only the Aryans but different other groups, like Sakas, Huns, Mughals, etc. invaded India at different points of time in history. A few of them settled in India; others came for plunder. In any way, the autochthonous groups were deeply affected by them. Many of them kept themselves isolated from others and receded into the remote forests or hills for security. They had always been eager to maintain their cultural identity.

Later on, the groups that were subjugated by the Aryans and others came to accept the ways of life of the latter, or had to modify their own ways of life under constant pressure. Many tribes came into contact with the caste Hindus, the dominant group in India, in very many ways. Moreover, their crude economic technology, changes in the eco-system, and increase in the size of population, compelled the tribal groups to search for the ways of increasing production and gaining economic security. They found one solution to their problem in the caste system. Caste system in India, we know, had one important feature, it provided economic security to different caste groups.

Hereditary calling of each caste group was a conspicuous factor of the caste system and what is more important, one caste group was not allowed to practise the calling or trade of another caste group. Thus caste group was to secure in its own trade in the non-competitive economic system of caste. Hindu caste groups again were dominant in other ways because of their economic position. Caste Hindus there formed a reference-group for the tribals. The latter sought a position in the caste hierarchy. Prof. N. K. Bose in his 'Cultural Anthropology' analysed the Hindu Method of tribal absorption. The social legislators of ancient India, as Bose pointed out, tried to build up a social organization on the basis of hereditary monopolistic guilds. Poor tribal people easily came within the fold of the more successful productive organisation of the Hindus, and they did not rise in revolt even when they were relegated to a lowly position within the Hindu society. The subjugated classes did not rise in revolt even when their lowly position in the caste hierarchy meant deprivation in different ways because Hindu society ensured for them a certain minimum of economic security which they could not obtain under their own tribal productive system; particularly after the latter had been affected by conquests or the Hindu encroachment upon the more fertile portions of the land, the bulk of which they previously occupied. The Hindus, moreover, exercised a policy of *laissez faire* with regard to the social and religious practices of tribal people even when they came within Hinduism, and this cultural autonomy may partly have been responsible for keeping the subjugated tribes satisfied and also for taking the edge off their discontent to a certain extent. Through the ages we perceive an interaction between the Hindu castes and the tribals who tried to find a place in the caste hierarchy, but who at the same time, were eager to protect their cultural and social autonomy. It gave rise to severe stress and strain in social life in India at different times. During the British regime, the foreign administrators tried to leave them undisturbed and keep isolated from

the rest of the population for convenience of administration. But in course of time the tribes in general, began to experience greater difficulties. Encroachment on the forest by groups from outside led to the cessation of rights of sole occupation. The same thing happened with regard to the forest produce. The land settlement policy, too, very seriously affected the system of tribal ownership. Oppression by the usurers and money-lenders and realisation of exorbitant interest, etc. led to a series of tribal disturbances and uprisings. Thus we find the Mal Paharia rising (1772), Chuar or Paik rebellion in Bengal (1787-1830), Kol insurrection (1831-32), Khond rising (1846), Santal Rebellion (1855), unrest in Dhanbad (1869-70), Sardari Agitation (1887), Birsa Movement (1895), Tana Bhagat Movement (1914), etc. Thus one finds, throughout the British period, solidarity movements or what have been called by Wallace 'Revitalization Movements'. A revitalization movement has been defined as 'a deliberate, organised, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture'. Though Wallace has failed to recognise the factor of threat to economic security of the lower groups and has over-emphasised the threat to the total cultural system, yet the economic factor has an important place in the explanation of these movements. At least a number of these movements were open revolts against oppression of the rulers or the neighbouring dominant groups. A few others were, of course, motivated by a desire for re-orientation of the traditional socio-cultural-cum-religious life of these tribals in order to have a distinctive status in society and at the same time, upgrade their own position in the social hierarchy, or at least acquire an equal position vis-a-vis other dominant groups.

III

After the Independence of India, the Government of India in consonance with the ideals of equality and justice and dignity of the individual and national unity,

as enshrined in the Constitution, made a vigorous attempt for the economic uplift and educational advancement of the backward sections designated as weaker section of the Indian population and in most of the cases, the tribes and low castes were included within these backward sections. For purposes of according specially favourable treatment, different tribes and castes were listed in a Schedule. Various measures were taken which, it was believed, would help these Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes overcome their initial handicaps. As a result, a new trend is observed in social life of India now. Different tribal groups came out in search of new identity. Thus the pendulum of history is having a new swing. Earlier the trend was one of absorption of tribes into the Hindu society. The groups were, in earlier for emulating the life-style of the Caste Hindus and thus finding a place in the caste hierarchy. The lower castes were always eager to initiate the ways of life of the higher castes. This process has been termed "Sanskritization" by M. N. Srinivas. The same process has been called 'Brahmanization' by N. K. Bose. S. C. Sinha has noted the process in the form of 'Kshatriyaization'. One however, finds a reverse process now. If one neglects the economic aspects of the phenomenon, one would make a mistake. The tribal groups or low caste groups are now eager to establish and maintain their separate cultural identity in order to avail themselves of the economic and other opportunities ensured for them by the Constitution and given to them by the Government. The caste system is no longer able to provide the people with economic security, the privileged Caste Hindus threaten the economic security of the low caste people and the tribal population. The growing political consciousness and the leftist political parties have led the tribal people and the low castes to oppose the privileged and exploiting high caste Hindus. Thus no longer a desire to shake off the tribal mark and assimilate the features of the life of high caste Hindus is found. Rather, the tribes and low castes are now engaged in a bitter struggle to establish their identity as

separate socio-cultural-linguistic groups and to make their position secure socio-economic order of the country.

Dr. Gautam in a paper (1973) described this aspect of Santal life in Bihar-Bengal border, an aspect of *Santalization*, where 'the cultural phenomenon works as mechanism for self-restraint. Revivalism is based on local ethnic traditions and ideals of golden age, a happy period in remote past and provides internal unity by conforming to or relating the Santal standard behaviour'.

My observation of Santal life in Midnapur and Bankura reveals a very clear picture of oscilation from one place to another. First, gradual process of Hinduization in the form of various Bhakti cults, in which Vaishnavite tendencies are reflected, is a peculiar Bengalee-Hindu peasant culture. Next, a line of development has taken place in some contact situations where the Santals, including other tribals converted to Christianity, got the opportunites of better education and economic improvement provided by many Christian missionaries. This directly contributed, to a great extent, to the awakening of a sense of consciousness among the tribals about their deplorable conditions. Along with this, a new type of retribalization movement in recent times, in the religious front, may be found in some places of this area. This is known as *Sari dharam*, a religion based on 'truth' as the term 'Sari' means 'truth'. A section of the Santal during 1961 census tried to identify themselves in distinct 'Sari dharam' religious group. This lead was taken by Late Sadhu Ramchand of Silda (Jhargram-Midnapur). Directed with an aim of striking a religious identity of the Santals in a region dominated by wide spread Hinduism and to some extent haunted with conversion to christianity of the Santals, 'Sari dharam' has made a distinction between three groups of Santals :

- (i) *Safa-hor* : following Saiva cult or Local Hinduism represented by Deswali Majhi etc.
- (ii) *Um-hor* : Christian Santal.
- (iii) *Bonga-hor* : followers of Saridharam, believers of traditional Santal gods.

This 'Saridharam' movement might be akin to broad-based

Kherwar movement of Chotanagpur. The main features of *Saridharam* are not only propitiation of the traditional gods but also the revival of traditional dance and music; they are, thus, eager to revive back their traditional culture and language. This retribalisation presents a picture of contra-acculturation. As my friend Mr. R. K. Gupta has discussed in an illuminating way, this process is discernible in Jharkhand movement which originated in the jungle tracts of West Bengal. The movement originated in the desire of the tribals led by the advanced or elite sections of the Santals and Mundas to establish a separate political and cultural identity (which would mean greater economic and other kinds of power for them) for themselves. The Jharkhand movement could not succeed in the long run for reasons best explained by Mr. Gupta. At present the leaders of the 'Jharkhand Party' are engaged in organising a movement for separate script, language, etc. for the tribals. That is to say, that are engaged in movement for cultural autonomy. But beneath the stratum of cultural movement, a discerning eye would definitely discover the desire for separate political identity and special economic privileges.

The sense of the impoverished, exploited and oppressed men has been kindled by the extremist political parties now. One finds in Debra and Gopiballavpur, the two prominent tribal areas of Midnapur, the breakout of Naxalbari Movement. This fact also has been explained by Mr. Gupta.

One fact is clear. Tribes and low castes in India are no longer eager to be 'Sanskritized'. 'Sanskritization' has been noted by M.N. Srinivas as one important process in explaining social change in Modern India. But a look at the recent events would reveal that not 'Sanskritization' but 'de-Sanskritization' or 're-Tribalization', a new phenomenon, in economic, political and social life in India now.

Different low castes and tribal groups are going back to and practising more and more vigorously the rites and rituals of tribal life and worship of tribal gods and goddesses; they are making greater efforts to reinforce their own dialects and to introduce separate script and language, in order to prove that

they are not at all, the same as the Sanskritic groups, and that they have their own identity markedly different from that of the dominant groups. They want economic security. They want end of exploitation. Nay, they want compensation for the loss they suffered earlier because of exploitation, i.e. they want to avail themselves of the economic opportunities provided for the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes.

Thus one finds not only creation of separate States of Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal, *et al*, but the movement of the Bagal, Deswali Majhi, Bhumij, Mahato and countless others for retribalization, just to get themselves scheduled as a tribe or caste for having the special treatment and privileges.

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India is a vast sub-continent, well marked off by the mountains and the seas from Asia. There are innumerable mountains and hills, capped with ever-green forests and the mainland is criss-crossed by a multitude of rivers and streams. In the midst of all these, there are the stretches of alluvial plain land, which sustain most of the population of this country. A section of our population, i.e. the so-called 'aboriginals' or the tribal groups of people still in these nature-blessed tracts, to whom the growth of early civilizations of this land are attributed. It is said that their ancestors once used stone-implements of different types, both crude and polished, evidences of which are still found in many parts of this country. Then there were series of migrations and attacks on them by some extra-territorial invading groups with better technological skill and hitting power, which pushed these autochthones back to some inhospitable forest regions of our country, less disturbed by human contact and social intercourse. These groups of people, due to their weakness, preferred isolation, and practically remained far away from the main stream of the changing Indian societies and cultures. Now we designate them as 'Tribes' or the tribal communities, and their number in this country is more than 4 crores, i.e. 7.5% of the total population.

These tribal people form a weaker section of our populace, and, in most, they smart under the grinding wheels of poverty, and are sunk in deep ignorance and utter superstition. For administrative purposes, most of them have declared as Scheduled Tribes, and this entitled them to enjoy benefit and privileges, which would solve their problems, raise their standard of living, and make them fit to live with other citizens of this country.

¹ Originally published in *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika*, Madras August, 1972.

They differ in physical features, talk in diverse languages, and belong to different types of economic systems, starting from food-gathering stage and ramifying into settled agricultural or industrial types.

These groups of people are distributed almost all over India, with variable concentration, in a few zones. There they live with their own method of life adjusting with environmental changes. Our Constitution has now assured them certain safe-guards i. e., protection against exploitation and social injustice, and right for ownership of land and the permission for free use of certain forest produce. Besides this a number of welfare activities are being implemented for their betterment.

The Background

The western part of West Bengal is a continuous part of Chota Nagpur plateau, and it spreads along the western border of Midnapur. Here in the midst of the groves of mango, *Mahua* (*Madhuka latifolia*) and dwarf *Sal* (*Shorea robusta*) trees, on the wide expanse of red brittle soil of undulating rolling ridges, girdled by a chain of streams and rivulets, which remain dry in the summer and overflow their banks during the rains, where the earth is bathed by the sweet water of the springs—in this blissful environment live a tribal group called 'Lodha'.

Along with them, live other tribal communities like, the Santals, the Mundas, the Koras, the Kharias, the Mahatos, and the Bhumijes. The Lodhas differ physically and culturally from these groups of people; added to this is the stigma of criminality imputed to them by the local people, as well as the Government. Even now, they are deemed as such, and in the event of any theft or dacoity in this area, they are instantly suspected and harassed, both by the people of the locality and by the administrative authorities.

The total number of Lodhas in the State of West Bengal is about 15,000, though the Census Department of the Government of India have mixed them up with the Kharias,

without any justification. They are concentrated in the districts of Midnapur. Some of them are found in the district of Hooghly in West Bengal, Singbhum in Bihar, and Mayurbhanj in Orissa. They speak a distorted form of Bengali. They live near the outskirts of forest, or sometimes in the fringe of some villages in aggregates of a few families. They are basically a food-gathering people and mainly subsist on collection of wild roots, tubers and edible leaves from the jungles, as also by the killing of wild game, birds, lizards and alligators which they use as food, and sell the skins of these animals. They also collect *tusser* cocoons, which are sold to a specialised group of people of the weaver community who prepare cloth out of these. Some leaves specially the leaves of the *kend* trees are collected by them and sold to outside traders, who prepare country-cigars with pounded tobacco mixed with these. They stich the leaves of *Sal* trees with thorns and use these as plates for serving food. A large group among also catch fish and tortoise during the rainy season in the nearby paddy fields or silted tanks of the deforested areas. They also collect faggots from the jungle, make bundles, and sell these in the local market in the locality. The money they earn in this way, is used to buy the daily necessities of life.

A section of them have migrated to some less forested regions, have come into contact with the agrarian communities, from whom they learnt the art of agriculture. Being thus accustomed to the techniques of agriculture they now work as day labourers or agricultural workers. But as all these means of earning are not regular and sufficient they face extreme privations in maintaining their family. Moreover, they are not now getting any facility to make use of the jungle produce as freely as before. Therefore, a large section of them have taken to anti-social activities.

Tradition of Origin

The term 'Lodha' is possibly derived from the Sanskrit word 'Lubdhaka', meaning a trapper or fowler. There is a land-

holding group of people in Madhya Pradesh named 'Lodha'. They are, according to the authorities, immigrants from Uttar Pradesh, and they originally belonged to the district of Ludhiana in Punjab. They adopted the appellation 'Lodha' after the place of their origin. According to Nesfield, the name Lodha or Ludhi has two different derivatives. One is *Lod*, which means 'clod', according to which 'Ludhi' means a clod-hopper. The other is that the Lodhas have adopted their name from the *Lodhi* tree, which grows in abundance in northern India, the bark of which is collected and sold by them as a dyeing agent.

The Lodhas feel pride in asserting themselves as 'Savara'—a generic term used in ancient literature for the forest-dwelling communities. In the Ramayana, we have the episode of Savari anxiously waiting for Ramchandra, who at that time, was in exile. In the Mahabharata, we read about the Kiratas or the Vyadhas, who were the kins of this Savara group of people. According to the tradition of their origin, the Lodhas say that they are the descendants of King Vishwabasu, who once reigned over the jungle tract of the Savar Country of Nilachal in Utkal (Orissa). This Tribal King had possessed the idol of Lord Jagannatha, now installed in the famous temple at Puri. Once the King of Puri, Indradumna was ordained in his dream that Lord Jagannath wanted to come from his jungle abode and stay at Puri. Then he sent his trusted Minister, Vidyapati, who was a Brahman by caste, to secure the image of the Lord. That astute Brahman very tactfully entered into Nilachal, the Savara country, made love to Lalita, the endearing and beautiful daughter of the King, and through her help came to know of the actual abode of the Lord. Later on, he successfully implemented the plan of stealthily taking away this image of the Lord to Puri. It is said that since then the Lodhas do not pay respect to the Brahmans, and they do not take their assistance in any ritual or ceremony.

Material Culture

Their huts are generally thatched, mudbuilt and of rectangular type in most of the cases, without any shutters or windows.

They have no land of their own, though they use *Khas* or Government lands for doing rudimentary agriculture. Now, a few among them, have been given some land by the Government for cultivation. They use earthen-ware vessels as cooking utensils. For cutting and felling trees, they use axes and for digging up roots and tubers they use a type of digging spade with a sharp iron-blade, tonged into a wooden shaft. For hunting purposes, they have bows and arrows. They use various types of basket-traps for catching fish from the shallow streams or paddy fields. The dress worn by the male is very simple, consisting of only a piece of lion-cloth. Now-a-days, however, some of them are using readymade garments. The female wears a *Sari* like other local people, but of cheaper variety. She uses bangles and a few ornaments of alloy-silver. Females decorate their body with tattoos, specially on the forehead and arms.

Social Organisation

The Lodhas are a patriarchate group of people. They consider other tribal communities as 'Adivasis', whereas the rest of the Caste Hindu groups are regarded by them as *Bengali Babus* or Bengali gentleman. This distinctly separates them from the other groups. The Lodha tribe is grouped into a few exogamous clans. These clans have their respective totems. Each member of the clan pays respect to the totemic object and never kills or injures it.

TABLE 1
Clan and Totem Affiliation

Sl. No.	Name of the Clan	Totem
1.	Bhakta	Chirka Alu (A kind of yam).
2.	Mallik	Makar/shark (A kind of sea-monster).
3.	Dandapath/ Bag	Tiger
4.	Nayek	Sal fish (<i>Ophicaphalus Marulius</i>).
5.	Digar	porpoise.
6.	Ahari	Chanda fish (<i>Ambasis Ranga</i>).
7.	Bhunia	Sal fish.
8.	Kotal	Moon/Grass-hopper.
9.	paramanik	Manik (A kind of bird).

The Bhakta clan is again subdivided into two groups. One is senior (Bara) and the other junior (Chhota). These clans are patrilineal units. These descend from father to son. After the marriage, the girls give up their father's clan, and accept the clan of their respective husbands. The members of the Kotal clan discard and replace their used earthenware vessels on every newmoon day, i.e. when the moon is not seen in the sky. The women of the same clan do not wear conch-shell bangles.

Most of the families are simple or of the nuclear type; though joint or extended types of families are not rare. In simple families, parents live with their unmarried children, whereas in joint or extended types of families, married sons are found to stay with their parents. There are cases of polygynous type of union, where two wives stay jointly. All the members pool their resources for the upkeep of the family. Marriage by payment of bride-price is the general rule among them. The bridegroom has to pay a bride-price varying from Rs. 7/- to Rs. 100/-, along with some clothes as presentation to the members of the bride's family. When a girl is married at a tender age, a second marriage ceremony called *Punar-bibhaha* is performed after she has attained puberty. In case of offering bride-price, the money is placed on a brass plate by the *Sambar*, or the chief conductor of marriage. In some place, specially in the jungle area, on the day of marriage, an altar of clay is prepared, which is brought from under the root of a *Sidha* tree. At the time of marriage, Mother Goddess (Basumati) and God of Righteousness (*Dharam Devata*) are worshipped. A wedding feast is arranged on the day of marriage, when all the traditional village officials are invited to bless the couple.

Widow marriage is in vogue among the Lodhas. Sometimes the deceased elder brother's wife is married by the younger brother, for which no bride-price is paid or formal rituals performed. This type of marriage is known as *Sanga*.

Village Organisation

The Lodhas have their own tribal council known as Panchayat.

The head of the council is known as Mukhia. The messenger is called *Dakua* or *Atgharia*. His main duty is to intimate the villagers about the particular decisions and directives of the Panchayat on village affairs. In a traditional council, personal disputes of the village, and the general problems of village administration are discussed. This type of panchayat also organises and manages the annual worships and other celebrations. The religious head of the village is known as *Deheri*. There are also assistants who help the *Deheri* at the time of goat-sacrifice. The name of the assistant of the *Deheri* is *Talia*. In many villages, there are sorcerers or magicians, who are suspected by the people for their supposed magical attributes. These magicians have their clients in the villages, far and near. The panchayat decides the cases, when an aggrieved person lodges a complaint to them. The panchayat may impose a fine on the offender, or ostracise him according to the nature of his offence, or take any other deterrent action.

Religious Life

The tutelary village deity of the Lodhas is known as Baram or Garam. His worship is necessary for the general welfare of the village. If he is aggrieved, they believe that the wild animals will make depredations in the village. Beside Baram, they worship Goddess *Sitla*, who is considered to be the controlling deity of epidemic diseases like cholera and pox. They worship her twice a year. Goddess *Chandi* is also worshipped for cure of chronic diseases. In all the cases, the *Deheri*, in consultation with the village, raises subscription and spends the money for purchasing various items needed for the worship. Goddess *Manasa* is supposed to be the controlling deity of the snakes. Her worship is done only by the snake-charmers of the Lodha community.

At the time of marriage and other celebrations, they propitiate *Basumata* or Mother Earth, and *Dharam Devata* or the God of Righteousness. But they do not make any sacrifice for their appeasement. They are considered ever-beneficial to them.

They also believe in various malevolent spirits hovering all about in an unseen form around them. They believe that these spirits control their destiny. For their appeasement, therefore, many rituals are performed and animals are sacrificed. The spirit of Jugini is appeased on a place in the outskirts of the village, where a black fowl is sacrificed.

After the annual worship of Baram or Sitala, communal festivals are held in the village. Their traditional drum is called 'Changu' which is played on, with untiring zest by expert drummers, and songs composed in distorted Bengali are sung in chorus, accompanied with dance. Their songs are of many types. A few are devotional in nature, in which a good number of popular Hindu gods and goddesses are extolled for their prowess and grace, indicating a slow process of acculturation of Hinduism. There are a few *Baramasi* songs depicting the episodes of twelve months connected with some heroes of the Epic literatures. Besides this, they participate in *Tusu* festival, which is very common in the western tract of this State. Thus they try to forget the drudgeries of their rigid life and sorrows and tribulations, through revelry and rejoicing at such celebrations.

Problems of living

It has been stated earlier that the Lodhas have been branded with the stigma of criminality. Prior to the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1952, they were considered as a criminal Tribe, and later on, as members of ex-criminal tribe. They were under the purview of this Law for which their movements were restricted, and on the least suspicion, they were arrested and tortured by the police. They were sent to jail for punishment for such supposed criminal activities. It is true that the total number of active criminals among the Lodhas are one-third of the total number of criminals in this district. This indicates their nature of criminal propensity. But nobody attempted earlier to find out why such criminality was growing among them. It has been proved that their criminality is due to territorial and economic displacement. As the people lived

by food-gathering and by forest produce they were not in a position to change their mode of life with the change of the circumstances that occurred, from time to time. They could not learn the art of agriculture all on a sudden. Rather, they were clamped into a smaller forest territory, which was no more in their possession. Unauthorised entrance into the forest and indiscriminate cutting of the trees were considered punishable by the Government and were banned.

Thus all their traditional means of livelihood were suddenly shut out to them, and being left with no alternative they chose the path of crime.

The basic causes of crime among the Lodhas still persist. The economically displaced Lodhas could not adapt themselves to the changing situations, which further drove them towards a precarious existence, and the growing needs of an expanding human stock, clamped in a small territory, could not be met with a hewer's income. Persisting frustration and lack of self-reliance brought in their trail perpetual stagnation in their collective life, and subsequently turned them into inveterate criminals, with every knock by the waves of changing circumstances.

Development Schemes

In 1954, the State Government and the Central Government jointly tried an experiment for resettling the Lodhas (approximately 50 families) at Auligeria, under the Police Station of Jhargram, through the Harijan Sevak Sangha, Bengal Branch. A sum of Rs. 1,500/- per family was allotted under various heads of expenditure, like house-purchase, purchase of bullocks, goats, agricultural implements, goat-rearing, payment for the social worker, and for unforeseen expenses likely to be incurred in course of rehabilitation work. Initially it seemed to give good results, but scheme had failed for lack of proper planning. Later on, the State Government entrusted the work to the Bharat Sevashram Sangha, a religious institution, dedicated mainly to serve the distressed persons, who undertook a rehabilitation scheme at Dholkat,

in the same area, after a year. The Sangha authorities selected a site near their centre and constructed 25 residential huts with corrugated iron-sheet roof. They purchased land, but only inferior land was available with the limited amount allotted. Everything was done in a cautious and calculated manner. But the food-gathering Lodhas could not be attracted to this type of land for the agricultural purposes.

The Sangha Authorities had their personal resources, which were often given to them in times of need. A few families were found to cultivate some fruit-trees in their kitchen garden-compound. They have organised a primary school and an Ashram hostel has been set up very recently. The Lodha boys along with some Santal boys stay there. The *Harijan Sevakendra* of Kukai in Kesari Police Station also purchased some land for 51 Lodha families. For a few years the entire land was cultivated jointly under the supervision of a social worker, but now the Tribal Welfare Department have directed that land should be distributed to them on personal basis, so that it might develop in them a sense of belonging. This has been implemented. But a few recipients of land of the colony gave away their land to others for cultivation on share-cropping or on cash payment basis. Goats, which were given to them, were consumed, and they are not getting the benefits, which were available during the management of the social worker. Yet a *grain-gola* has been started, and all the tribal people of the locality are taking its help. One primary school has been established here, but no Ashram facilities have been extended to the school-going children.

The Samaj Sevak Sangha is another voluntary organisation established by some anthropologists and social workers. The State Government had entrusted them with the work of organising a colony in the above-mentioned manner. Altogether 39 families (on an average expenditure of Rs. 1,500/-per family) were resettled at Daharpur, under the Police Station of Narayanagarh in the Sadar South Subdivision of Midnapur. At the very beginning the Sangha authorities

took a few bold steps, which included (i) formation of a Rehabilitation Sub-committee with three Government nominees, beginning from Block level to State level, (ii) provision of residential house facilities, with a community hut for everybody, who may require shelter, for some reason or other. (iii) purchase of bullocks, not for all the families, but as per demand of the land, (iv) purchase of maximum agricultural land of good type and (v) *revitalisation of recreational life* along with an adult education forum and community participation.

Later on, a multi-purpose co-operative society was organised and all these have been placed in their charge now, to develop their leadership. Now this co-operative society, as per direction of the Tribal Welfare Dept, have distributed land on family basis, to make them domestic-minded. A junior Basic school has also been started. Three Ashram hostels, one for the girls, and two for the boys, have already been functioning. A separate campus has been developed, where they stay happily along with other tribal boys. The children have thus been segregated from the undesirable atmosphere of their homes. Again, a senior Basic School has been started along with a library and vocational training centre. Improved agricultural methods are being taught to the Ashramites. As a result of frequent social intercourse and participation in many common programmes, the Lodha children have now come up to the norms of the existing society, and this ensures for them a more prosperous and assured life. This organisation is again entrusted with the task of rehabilitation at Dhansol, under the Police Station of Binpur, where a riot took place between the Mahatos and the Lodhas recently. There, they have been able to purchase superior cultivable land for the Lodhas. They have also organised a 'Minor Forest Produce Co-operative Society' not only for the Lodhas, but for other tribals, too. A few boys of this village have been brought to Daharpur Ashram for education. Very recently, the State Government jointly with the Central Government have allotted a good number of tiled

residential huts, bullocks and goats, and some land for the landless, from Government possessed Khas land under Sub-Block Scheme. As a matter of fact, they have become more interested and responded splendidly to such developmental activities. Thus the Lodhas are becoming more domestic-minded, though the degree varies from place to place. The present administration of the State Government and the District officer, T. W., Midnapur are more sympathetic than their predecessors, who refunded sanctioned money to the authorities, without spending these properly for developmental purposes. From all these, it is expected that the Lodhas, in course of time, will find better days and better hope with elevated aspirations and wide world-view, under the present administrative efforts, and by the devoted service of the social workers of such voluntary organisations.

What Next ?

It is clear from the above that the multifarious problems of the Lodhas cannot be solved all on a sudden, just as by shock therapy. Though a good many of them have been assured a better life, yet there are other major problems, problems not only outside the colony, but inside, too. It has been mentioned that there are a number of notorious, incorrigible criminals in the Lodha villages. They have underhand relations with a section of the local people, who constitute the so-called elite. They are the main receivers of the stolen goods. Naturally, their relationship with the recidivist Lodhas are far stronger than the Welfare Agencies. So, this type of people, along with this section of the Lodhas, either within the colony or outside the colony, create various resistances, which indirectly split up the group life or the village solidarity, and cause hindrance to development work. But their number is not too large. This type of resistance can be overcome if Government extend their hand of co-operation to the organising agencies. Besides, employment should be given to the educated Lodhas, by which they will be in a position to mix with the greater section of the

society. This will bring emotional integration without disturbing their traditions. It is certain that the world view of the Lodhas and Lodha ways of life, as well as their aspiration level, should be elevated through community participation, and paying regard and respect. The civilised neighbours of the Lodhas should also come forward with new plans for doing good to the Lodhas, just forgetting the prevailing notions of the past.

The Lodhas should realise that the people no longer hate them, no longer disbelieve them, because they are in a position to demand prestige and status due to their changed ways of life and activities. The Lodhas should be reminded that they were not a 'benighted people' for all time. They were as happy as any other people living on the earth in olden days. As a tribe, they have migrated from forest to forest, along the banks of the rivers, on the hills and dales, quite freely. Those times are gone, when they could enjoy the abundance of nature by plucking fruits, hunting and sporting in gaiety. With their homeland passing under the control of exploiters, they were converted into real pagans. Goaded by the pangs of hunger and tyrannies of an oppressive neighbour and faced with the problems of earning a livelihood, they accepted the challenge of the struggle for existence. The only way left to them to tide over the crisis was to treat the path of crime. With the advent of British rule, they were dubbed as "habitual criminals". Environmental impact and social neglect have converted them today to a poverty-stricken, weak, isolated and "criminal tribe".

It is expected that with missionary zeal and Government resources, they will be assured a prosperous life, in course of time. These Welfare Centres are nothing but the small islands of hope in the midst of the bleak ocean, in which the Lodhas now live.

5. *PHYSICAL AFFINITY OF THE LODHAS OF MIDNAPORE¹*

The Lodhas are an ex-criminal tribe of West Bengal. They mainly live in the jungle tracts of the district of Midnapore. The other tribal peoples living as their neighbours are the Santals, Mundas, Kharias and the Bhumijes. An attempt has been made in this paper to find out the somatic affinity of the Lodhas with the above peoples. For this purpose the earlier available anthropometric data have been utilized. Risley has provided anthropometric data for the Bhumijes, but the 't' test of significance could not be applied due to the absence of the statistical constants. Roy and Roy (1937) have provided the Kharia (Hill Kharia) measurements, while those of Bose (1932-33) and Sarkar (1954) have been utilized for the Mundas and Santals respectively.

The comparative anthropometric data are given in Table 11.

Lodha anthropometric data

Anthropometric measurements and somatic observations on 200 male and 50 female Lodhas were taken between October 1952 and June 1954 at the following places :

TABLE 1

Police station	Name of village	No. of males measured	No. of females measured
Jhargram	Radhanagar	4	
	Bagmuri	2	
	Mandipa	3	
Nayagram	Pathardahara	14	
	Tapabon	2	
	Darkhuli	3	
	Kadamdiha	28	
	Jamshal	8	
	Nayagram	6	
Sankrail	Balkisol	3	
Jamboni	Tetala	5	

¹ Originally published in MAN IN INDIA Vol. 36, No. 2, 1956.

TABLE I—(Contd.)

Police station	Name of village	No. of males measured	No. of females measured
Narayangarh	Dihipur	22	
	Karangabari	25	14
	Mamansa	10	
	Metial	13	
	Birkar		26
	Daharpur		10
Kesiari	Kukai	38	
Dantan	Saukaridanga	7	
	Benadubi	7	
		200	50

The following observations were made: skin colour; eye colour and eye slits; eye-brows; supraorbital ridges; hair form, colour, texture and quantity; forehead; nasion depression, nasal septum; prognathism; lips and chin.

TABLE 2

Skin colour

Scale (von Luschan)	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
22	9	4.5	1	2.0
26	1	0.5	0	0
29	39	19.5	15	30.0
30	94	47.0	26	52.0
31	49	24.5	7	14.0
32	8	4.0	1	2.0

The colour of the skin was observed on the inner side of the upper arm. The colour ranges from tawny white to dark, the majority being dark brown. The female Lodhas are of lighter shade ranging from yellowish brown to dark brown.

TABLE 3

Eye

Scale (Martin)					
		<i>Eye colour</i>			
1	12	6.0	6	12.0	
2	178	89.0	43	86.0	
3	10	5.0	1	2.0	
		<i>Eye slit (Canthi)</i>			
Straight	150	75.0	33	66.0	
Oblique	50	25.0	17	34.0	
		<i>Eyebrow</i>			
Scanty	38	19.5	16	32.0	
Medium	112	56.0	33	66.0	
Bushy	41	20.5			
Connected	9	4.5	1	2.0	

The colour of the eye in the male is dark brown in 89% cases. The lighter colour of the iris is marked in 5% cases whereas 6% are brown. In the case of the females, eye colour is dark brown to the extent of 86% and brown in 12%. The lighter colour of the female iris is 2% which is significantly smaller than in the males.

The eyeslit is horizontal in the majority of cases. It has been found in 75% and 66% among males and females respectively. Oblique slit is noticed in the frequency of 25% and 34% among males and females respectively.

The eyebrow is medium among males to the extent of 56%, reaching 66% among females. Bushy eyebrows are found among males (20.5%).

TABLE 4
Supraorbital ridges

	Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%
Imperceptible	14	7.0	9	18.0
Trace	124	62.0	39	78.0
Moderate	62	31.0	2	4.0

The supraorbital ridge is found in traces in the frequency of 62% and 78% among males and females respectively. Moderate supraorbital ridges are found in 31% and 4% among males and females respectively. Imperceptible supraorbital ridges occur in 7% of males and 18% of females.

TABLE 5

Hair

Scale (Fischer-Saller)		No	%	No	%
<i>Colour</i>					
27	...	137	68.5	45	90.0
28	...	61	30.5	4	8.0
<i>Form</i>					
...	Straight	—	—	—	—
...	Wavy	200	100%	50	100
<i>Texture</i>					
...	Coarse	11	5.5	1	2.0
...	Medium	142	71.0	33	66.0
...	Fine	47	23.5	16	32.0
<i>Quantity</i>					
...	Scanty	11	5.5	—	—
...	Medium	164	82.0	46	92.0
...	Thick	25	12.5	4	8.0

The colour of the hair is similar to No. 27 of Fisher-Saller scale in 68.5% cases in the males and in 90% of cases among the females. No. 28 is also not insignificant as it is found in 30.5% cases among males and 8% among females. From a study of the hair it is seen that the Lodhas are a wavy-haired people, almost 100% both in the case of males and females. Deep wavy hair is sometimes observed. The hair texture is medium; 71% and 66% being present in males and females respectively.

The quantity of hair is also medium amongst 82% of the females.

TABLE 6

Forehead

Character	Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%
<i>Height</i>				
Low	25	12.5	16	32.0
Medium	160	80.0	27	54.0
High	15	7.5	7	14.0
<i>Breadth</i>				
Narrow	7	3.5	6	12.0
Medium	187	93.5	40	80.0
Broad	6	3.0	4	8.0
<i>Slope Backwards</i>				
None	168	84.0	46	92.0
Slight or marked slope	16	8.0	3	6.0
Medium	16	8.0	1	2.0

The forehead both in the males and females is medium, the percentages being 80 and 54 respectively. It is also not uncommon to come across instances of low and high foreheads which vary from 12.5% in males to 32% in females in the case of the former and 7.5% in males to 14% in females in the case of the latter.

The breadth of the forehead is medium in both males and females.

Foreheads with marked slope are found to the extent of 8% in males and 6% in females.

TABLE 7

Nose

Character	Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%
<i>Nasion Depression</i>				
Shallow	77	38.5	30	60.0
Medium	39	19.5	10	20.0
Deep	84	42.0	10	20.0
<i>Nasal Profile</i>				
Straight	60	30.0	6	12.0
Concave	87	43.5	43	86.0
Convex	12	6.0	1	2.0
Concavo-convex	41	20.5	nil	nil
<i>Nasal Tip</i>				
Horizontal	116	58.0	35	70.0
Directed upward	21	10.5	12	24.0
Directed downward	63	31.5	3	6.0

The nasion depression in the males is deep among 42%, medium among 19.5 and shallow among 38.5%. In the females it is 60% shallow while the medium and deep depression are 20% each. There is a prevalent tendency towards the nasal bridge being concave in 43.5%, while it is straight among 30% in the case of the males. Convex nose was found in the males to the extent of 6% only. In females 86% of the noses observed were found to be concave. The nasal septum is horizontal in 58% of the males whereas it is 70% in the females. Downward direction of the nasal septum occurs in the males to the extent of 31.5% and 6% in the case of females.

TABLE 8
Alveolar Prognathism

Character	Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%
Slight	71	35.5	20	40.0
None	129	64.5	30	60.0

Alveolar prognathism is absent in the males and females in 64.5% and 60% cases respectively. Slight prognathism is marked in 35.5% males and 40% females.

TABLE 9
Lips

Character	Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%
<i>Form</i>				
Thin	8	4.0	—	—
Medium	188	94.0	50	100
Thick	4	2.0	—	—
<i>Eversion</i>				
Absent or nil	189	94.5	50	100
Slight	11	5.5	—	—

In general, the lips are medium in 94% among the males and 100% among females. Thin lips were observed in 4% of the male folk. The eversion is practically absent in females and is only slight (5.5%) in the case of males.

TABLE 10
Chin

Character	Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%
<i>Prominence</i>				
Prominent	72	36.0	39	78.0
Medium	128	64.0	11	22.0
<i>Form</i>				
Oval	142	71.0	42	84.0
Round	13	6.5	4	8.0
Square	31	15.5	3	6.0
Pointed	14	7.0	1	2.0

The chin is medium in 64% of the males and 22% of females, whereas the prominence of chin is seen in the males and females in 36% and 78% respectively. Oval form of chin occurs

in the males to the extent of 71 and in the females it is 84%. Square form of chin is seen in 15.5% males and 6% females.

Summary of somatoscopic observations

It will be found from the preceding observations that both the male and the female Lodha possess a dark brown (No. 30 of von Luschan's scale) skin colour as found on the inner side of the upper arm. The males show the next highest percentage of darker skin colour (No. 31) while the females show the next highest percentage of lighter skin colour (No. 29). In both the sexes the eye colour is predominantly dark brown (No. 3 of Martin Scale), while the males show a higher frequency of lighter iris than the females. Both the sexes have the highest frequency of straight eye-slit while the eyebrows are medium broad in both the sexes. The supraorbital ridges are present only in traces in both sexes.

The hair colour agrees with No. 27 of Fischer-Saller scale in both the sexes, though the males show a higher percentage of No. 28. Hair form is wavy, while both the texture and the quantity are medium.

The forehead shows medium height and breadth in both the sexes while there is no backward slope in the majority of the cases.

The nasal depression is deep in the male in the majority of cases, while in the females the preponderant form is shallow. Shallow depression occurs in males in the frequency next to deep. The nasal profile is concave in both the sexes though the females show it preponderantly. Among the males the straight nasal profile is found in about 1/3 of the cases, while the concavo-convex form occurs in about 1/5 of the cases. The tip of the nose is horizontal in both the sexes, though its frequency is much higher among females than among males. It will be seen from the above data that the sexual difference is apparent in the nasal form. The female nose shows lesser variability than the male nose.

Slight alveolar prognathism is present in almost equal proportion in both the sexes.

The lips are medium in both the sexes while there is no eversion in either sex.

The females show a higher frequency of chin prominence than the males though both the sexes present its oval form predominantly.

Anthropometric measurements

Only adults of both sexes were measured according to the technique prescribed by Martin. The following anthropometric measurements were taken on 200 male and 50 female Lodhas: Stature, head length, head breadth, bizygomatic breadth, bigonial breadth, nasal height, nasal breadth, auricular height, least frontal breadth, morphological facial length, morphological superior facial length, horizontal circumference of head, and sitting height vertex.

The Lodha anthropometric data have been compared with the Bhumij (Risely), Hill Kharia (Roy & Roy), Munda (Bose), and Santal (Sarkar). For purposes of comparison the 't' test of significance has been applied and the formula used is.

$$t = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{\sqrt{\frac{(\sigma_1)^2}{N_1} + \frac{(\sigma_2)^2}{N_2}}}$$

where M_1 and M_2 stand for the mean values of the two samples and σ_1 and σ_2 the standard error of the two mean values. The value of 3 has been taken as the standard of significance.

TABLE 11
Measurements of 200 Males in cm.

Measurement	Mean ± standard error	S. D.* ± standard error	C. V.* ± standard error
Max. head length	18.18±0.05	0.66±0.03	3.63±0.18
Max. head breadth	13.79±0.03	0.49±0.02	3.55±0.18
Least Frontal breadth	10.20±0.03	0.47±0.02	4.61±0.23
Bizygomatic breadth	12.19±0.04	0.58±0.03	4.76±0.24
Bigonial breadth	9.99±0.04	0.54±0.03	5.41±0.27
Nasal height	4.52±0.02	0.35±0.02	7.74±0.39
Nasal breadth	3.16±0.02	0.28±0.01	7.26±0.36
Auricular height	11.93±0.08	1.12±0.06	9.39±0.47
Morph. Facial length	10.59±0.04	0.62±0.03	5.85±0.29
„ Sup. Facial length	5.91±0.03	0.44±0.02	7.44±0.37
Hor. cir. of head	54.95±0.10	1.47±0.07	2.68±0.13
Height vertex	159.13±0.44	6.16±0.31	3.87±0.19
Sitting ht. vertex	76.77±0.24	3.47±0.17	4.46±0.22

TABLE 12

Indexes

Measurement	Mean ± standard error	S. D.* ± standard error	C. V.* ± standard error
Cephalic index	76.06±0.28	3.93±0.20	5.17±0.26
Altitudinal index	65.65±0.48	6.80±0.34	10.35±0.52
Breadth-height index	85.62±0.59	8.40±0.42	9.80±0.49
Nasal index	85.50±0.56	8.00±0.40	9.35±0.47
Upper Facial index	46.25±0.28	3.95±0.19	8.55±0.42
Total Facial index	82.98±0.37	5.20±0.26	6.25±0.31

TABLE 13

Measurements of 50 Females in cm.

Measurement	Mean ± standard error	S. D.* ± standard error	C. V.* ± standard error
Maximum head length	17.34±0.08	0.67±0.06	3.29±0.33
Maximum head breadth	13.65±0.07	0.46±0.05	3.37±0.34
Least Frontal breadth	9.72±0.06	0.42±0.04	4.32±0.43
Bizygomatic breadth	12.15±0.03	0.35±0.04	2.88±0.29
Bigonial breadth	9.04±0.02	0.67±0.07	7.41±0.74
Nasal height	0.14±0.04	0.28±0.03	6.67±0.68
Nasal breadth	3.57±0.04	0.25±0.02	7.00±0.70
Auricular height	11.58±0.11	0.79±0.08	6.82±0.68
Morph. Facial length	9.98±0.06	0.45±0.04	4.53±0.45
Morph. Superior Facial length	5.39±0.14	0.39±0.04	7.23±0.72
Hor. cir. of head	53.89±0.14	0.96±0.10	1.28±0.18
Ht. vertex	149.45±0.96	6.80±0.68	4.62±0.46
Sitting height	75.89±0.46	3.27±0.33	4.31±3.43

TABLE 14

Indexes

Measurement	Mean ± standard error	S. D.* ± standard error	C. V.* ± standard error
Cephalic index	78.40±0.53	3.75±0.37	4.82±0.48
Altitudinal index	65.98±0.68	4.85±0.48	7.35±0.73
Breadth-height index	84.69±0.94	6.69±0.67	7.91±0.79
Nasal index	85.79±0.96	6.81±0.68	7.92±0.79
Upper Facial index	43.52±0.43	3.06±0.31	7.03±0.70
Total Facial index	82.49±0.83	5.91±0.59	7.15±0.71

* S. D. = Standard Deviation. * C. V. = Co-efficient of variation.

TABLE 15

T-test of Significance : Difference of Means

Character	Kharia-Lodha Diff.		Munda-Lodha Diff.		Santal-Lodha Diff.	
Max. head length	0.11	1.37	0.52	8.66	0.52	7.40
Max. head breadth	0.18	3.00	0.02	0.50	0.10	2.50
Head height	0.35	3.50	0.10	1.25	0.66	7.30
Least frontal breadth	0.18	3.60	0.01	0.38	0.08	2.00
Bizygomatic breadth	0.77	12.83	0.98	24.50	1.16	23.29
Bigonial breadth	0.89	14.83	0.04	0.80	0.05	1.00
Nasal height	0.07	1.75	0.32	10.67	0.35	8.75
Nasal breadth	0.05	1.66	2.16	5.33	0.07	2.30
Total facial height	0.09	0.90	0.59	11.80	0.88	17.60
Head circumference	—	—	1.51	11.62	2.28	8.40
Stature	3.03	6.90	0.98	2.20	0.47	1.06
Indices						
Length-breadth index	1.37	3.70	1.72	5.37	2.21	5.82
Length-height index	1.31	2.18	1.25	2.35	1.31	2.47
Nasal index	3.14	2.90	2.21	3.11	7.04	8.90
Total facial index	0.20	2.80	1.92	4.17	2.86	5.39

TABLE 16

Comparative Study of Means with Standard Error of the Means of the Lodhas and others compared
(Measurements in cm.)

Character	Bhumij (Risley etc.) (n=100)	Kharia (Roy & Roy) (n=70)	Munda (Bose) (n=250)	Lodha (Bhowmick) (n=200)	Santal Mean \pm SE	(Sarkar) n
Max. head length	18.59	18.29 \pm 0.07	18.70 \pm 0.04	18.18 \pm 0.05	18.70 \pm 0.05	166
Max. head breadth	13.96	13.61 \pm 0.06	13.81 \pm 0.03	13.79 \pm 0.03	13.89 \pm 0.03	168
Head height	12.53	11.58 \pm 0.06	12.03 \pm 0.04	11.93 \pm 0.08	12.59 \pm 0.05	167
Least fr. breadth	10.23	10.02 \pm 0.04	10.19 \pm 0.02	10.20 \pm 0.03	10.12 \pm 0.03	168
Bizygomatic br.	13.18	12.96 \pm 0.05	13.17 \pm 0.02	12.19 \pm 0.04	13.35 \pm 0.03	168
Bizygomatic br.	—	9.10 \pm 0.05	9.95 \pm 0.03	9.99 \pm 0.04	9.94 \pm 0.04	167
Nasal height	4.67	4.45 \pm 0.04	4.84 \pm 0.02	4.52 \pm 0.02	4.87 \pm 0.03	168
Nasal breadth	4.04	3.91 \pm 0.03	4.02 \pm 0.02	3.86 \pm 0.02	3.79 \pm 0.02	168
Total facial height	—	10.68 \pm 0.10	11.18 \pm 0.03	10.59 \pm 0.04	11.47 \pm 0.04	168
Head circumference	—	—	53.44 \pm 0.08	54.95 \pm 0.10	52.67 \pm 0.26	32
Stature	159.2	156.10 \pm 0.06	158.15 \pm 0.03	159.13 \pm 0.44	159.60 \pm 0.04	168
<i>Indices</i>						
Cephalic index	75.0	74.69 \pm 0.25	74.34 \pm 0.17	76.06 \pm 0.28	78.85 \pm 0.26	166
Altitudinal ind.	—	64.34 \pm 0.37	64.40 \pm 0.22	65.65 \pm 0.48	66.96 \pm 0.23	167
Nasal index	86.5	88.64 \pm 0.83	83.29 \pm 0.44	85.50 \pm 0.56	78.46 \pm 0.56	168
Total facial index	—	82.78 \pm 0.62	84.90 \pm 0.28	82.98 \pm 0.37	85.84 \pm 0.38	166

As there are no corresponding female anthropometric data the female Lodha data could not be compared.

The comparative anthropometric data of the different groups are given in Table 16. The values of *t* are given in Table 15.

TABLE 17
Stature

Character	Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%
Very Short (130.0—149.9)	12	6.0	27	54.0
Short (150.0—159.9)	98	49.0	20	40.0
Below Medium (160.0—163.9)	48	24.0	2	4.0
Medium (164.0—166.9)	27	13.5	1	2.0
Above Medium (167.0—169.9)	8	4.0	—	—
Tall (170.0—179.9)	5	2.5	—	—
Very Tall (180.0—199.9)	2	1.0	—	—

From the above table it is seen that 49% males and 40% females are short in stature while 13.5% males and 2% females are of medium height, 2.5% males are tall in stature. The mean stature of the male Lodha is 159.13 ± 0.44 , the minimum being 142.0 cm. and the maximum 181.0 cm.

The Lodha women show the mean stature of 149.46 ± 0.96 cm., the minimum and the maximum varying between 139.0 and 165.0 cm. respectively. The mean stature of the Bhumij is 159.2 cm. while the same for the Kharia is 156.10 ± 0.06 . The mean values for the Munda and the Santal are 158.15 ± 3.03 and 159.60 ± 0.04 respectively. This shows that the Lodha stature approaches that of the Bhumij and the Santal, the Kharia and the Munda being shorter than the Lodha. The Kharia shows the most marked difference. This is also confirmed by the values of the *t*. The Kharia-Lodha value is 6.90 as compared with 2.20 and 1.06 for Munda-Lodha and Santal-Lodha respectively. Stature is known to increase as a result of urbanization and the higher stature of the Lodha in comparison with the Kharia appears to show the progressive urbanization of the Lodhas in contrast to the Kharia who is yet locked up in forest areas.

TABLE 18
Length-Breadth Index

Character	Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%
Dolichocephal (X—75.9)	114	57.0	13	26.0
Mesoccephal (76.0—80.9)	62	31.0	96	52.0
Brachycephal (81.0—85.4)	20	10.0	11	22.0
Hyper-Brachycephal (Over 85.5)	4	2.0	—	—

Table 11 shows that 57% males and 26% females are dolichocephalic, 31% males and 52% mesocephalic, while 10% males and 22% females are brachycephalic. The mean cephalic index of the male Lodha is 76.06 ± 0.28 . It varies between the minimum and the maximum of 68.0 and 88.0 respectively. The female mean value is 78.40 ± 0.53 , the range of variation being from 70.0 to 86.0.

The mean cephalic index of the Bhumij according to Risley is 75.0 while that of the Kharia according to Roy & Roy is 74.69 ± 0.25 , that of the Munda 74.34 ± 0.17 and that of the Santal 73.83 ± 0.26 . Thus the Lodha possesses the highest index of all. This is borne out by the values of t since all the three groups show values higher than 3 :

The Kharia-Lodha value of t for cephalic index is 3.70, but in the case of head length and head breadth, the values of t are 1.37 and 3.00 respectively.

In head length the Lodha (18.18 ± 0.05) and the Kharia (18.29 ± 0.07) agree very closely, which is also borne out by the value of t . The Munda (18.70 ± 0.04) and the Santal (18.70 ± 0.05) differ widely from the Lodha mean and the same appears to be the case in respect of the Bhumij (18.59) as well. In respect of head breadth however the Lodha (13.79 ± 0.03) differs widely from the Kharia (13.61 ± 0.05), while they show a very close resemblance with the Munda (13.81 ± 0.03) and stand closer to the Santal (13.89 ± 0.03) than the Kharia. This appears to show that the Lodha head form is possibly very near the Kharia in head length and the Munda in head breadth. In head breadth, the four groups Kharia, Lodha, Munda and Santal appear to be closely related, while in head length the Lodha approaches the Kharia alone. The Lodha

head length has probably undergone some modification, and this is also observed to a certain extent in the case of stature. It is difficult to attribute any definite reason for this change; both urbanization and hybridization may be responsible for this change. The Lodha shows a greater degree of urbanization than any of the above four groups. Further resource along this line is however necessary before we can interpret the relative influences of hybridization and urbanization. The mean value for head circumference of the Lodha is 54.95 ± 0.10 and the same for the Munda is 53.44 ± 0.08 and that of the Santal 52.67 ± 0.26 . In head circumference none of the groups approaches the Lodha, as will be apparent from the values of *t*.

TABLE 19
Length-Height Index

Character	Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%
Chamaecephal ($X-57.6$)	22	11.0	1	2.0
Orthocephal ($57.7-62.5$)	44	22.0	9	18.0
Hypsicephal ($62.6-X$)	134	67.0	40	80.0

Both male and female Lodhas are hypsicephalic, the percentages being 67 and 80 respectively. The other two indices are found to occur in higher percentages among males than among females. The mean length-height index of the Kharia is 64.34 ± 0.37 , that of the Santal 66.96 ± 0.23 compared with 65.65 ± 0.48 of the Lodha.

TABLE 20
Breadth-Height Index

Character	Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%
Tapeinocephal ($X-78.9$)	44	22.0	9	18.0
Metriocephal ($79.0-84.9$)	46	23.5	17	34.0
Acrocephal ($85.0-X$)	110	55.0	24	48.0

In breadth-height index the majority of the Lodhas, both male and female, are acrocephalic; their percentages being 55 and 48 respectively. The other two indices are found in almost equal frequency among the males while the females show more of metriocephaly than tapeinocephaly.

The head height of the Lodha is 11.93 ± 0.08 compared with 12.03 ± 0.04 of the Munda, 11.58 ± 0.06 of the Kharia and 12.59 ± 0.05 of the Santal. The Bhumij head height is 12.53. This shows that the Lodha stands closest to the Munda in respect of this character. In length-height index, however, the four groups Lodha, Kharia, Munda and Santal show a close affinity as will be evident from the values of t , which are lower than .3 in all cases inspite of the Lodha showing a significant difference in respect of head height with Kharia ($t=3.50$) and the Santal ($t=7.30$).

Length-height index is a better criterion of racial affinity than length-breadth index and the closest affinity with the Munda in respect of head height and the close affinity of the Lodha with the Kharia, the Munda and the Santal in respect of length-height index point to a relationship with the Mundari peoples. This point will be further discussed afterwards.

TABLE 21
Upper Facial Index

Character	Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%
Hypereuryne ($\times-42.9$)	35	17.5	19	38.0
Euryene (43.0-47.9)	95	47.5	25	50.0
Mesene (48.0-52.9)	57	28.5	5	10.0
Leptene (53.0-56.9)	10	5.0	1	2.0
Hyperleptene (57.0- \times)	3	1.5	—	—

Both the Lodha males and females have the highest percentage of broad faces. The females show broader faces than the males. The mean upper facial index of the Lodha males and females are 46.25 ± 0.28 and 43.52 ± 0.43 respectively.

TABLE 22
Total Facial Index

Character	Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%
Euryprosopic (79.00-83.9)	114	57.0	29	58.0
Mesoprosopic (84.0-87.9)	49	24.5	12	24.0
Leptoprosopic (88.0-92.9)	37	18.5	9	18.0

Both the male and female Lodhas have the highest percentage of flat face. The total facial height of the Lodha male is 10.59 ± 0.04 as compared with 10.68 ± 0.10 for the Kharia, 11.18 ± 0.03 for the Munda and 11.47 ± 0.04 for the Santal. This shows that the Lodha possesses the shortest total facial height and approaches the Kharia in this character, as will be evident from the value of t as well.

The bizygomatic breadth of the Lodha is 12.19 ± 0.04 as compared with 13.13 of the Bhumij, 12.96 ± 0.05 for the Kharia 13.17 ± 0.02 for the Munda and 13.35 ± 0.03 for the Santal. Similar to the total facial height this character of the face appears to be the smallest in the case of the Lodha. The difference in this character appears to be one of the highest of all as will be evident from the high values of t . The bizygomatic breadth of the Lodha is smaller than that of the Kharia ; but the bigonial breadth of the former (9.99 ± 0.04) is greater than that of the latter (9.10 ± 0.05). The mean total facial index of the Lodha male is 82.98 ± 0.37 compared with 82.78 ± 0.62 of the Kharia, 84.90 ± 0.28 of the Munda and 85.84 ± 0.38 of the Santal.

TABLE 23
Nasal Index

Character	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Leptorrhine (55.0—69.9)	5	2.5	—	—
Mesorrhine (70.0—84.9)	81	40.5	19	38.0
Platyrrhine (85.0—99.9)	114	57.0	31	62.0

So far as nasal index is concerned, 2.5% males are leptorrhine while 40.5% males and 38% females are mesorrhine, 57% males and 62% females are platyrrhine.

The mean nasal index of the male Lodha is 85.59 ± 0.56 , the minimum being 65.0 and the maximum 102.0. The same for the female is 85.79 ± 0.96 , the minimum being 73.0 and the maximum 98.0.

The Bhumij nasal index shows a mean value of 86.5 while that of the Kharia is 88.64 ± 0.83 , that of the Munda 83.29 ± 0.44 and the same for the Santal 78.46 ± 0.56 . The value of t shows 'a

significant difference between the Santal and the Lodha (8.90) ; whereas the same between the Kharia and the Munda is 2.90 and 3.11 respectively. This shows that the Lodha shows a closer affinity with the Munda and the Kharia. The closest affinity however appears to be with the Kharia, as will be evident from the relative values of the nasal height and nasal breadth.

The Lodha males have mean nasal height of 4.52 ± 0.02 , as compared with 4.67 for the Bhumij, 4.45 ± 0.04 for the Kharia, 4.84 ± 0.02 for the Munda and 4.87 ± 0.03 for the Santal. Thus in nasal height the Lodha stands closer to the Kharia than any of the above groups. The same is also true of nasal breadth of the Lodha is 3.86 ± 0.02 as compared with 4.04 for the Bhumij, 3.91 ± 0.03 for the Kharia, 4.02 ± 0.02 for the Munda, and 3.79 ± 0.02 for the Santal. The values of t for the Kharia-Lodha nasal characters also bear it out.

Conclusion

It will be seen from the above remarks that the Lodhas show a close affinity with the Kharias in respect of head length, head breadth ($t=3.00$), nasal height, nasal breadth, total facial height, length-height index, nasal index and total facial index ; while the affinity with the Munda is seen in respect of head breadth, head height, least frontal breadth, bigonial breadth, stature and length-height index. The affinity with the Santal is seen in respect of head breadth, bigonial breadth, nasal breadth, stature and length-height index. Thus the four tribes show a common affinity in respect of the head breadth and length-height index, which means that all the four peoples possess some common elements in the head form and the differentiation in head length has brought about the present difference in the form of the head. Whether the head length has undergone any modification or is due to a particular racial strain is difficult to interpret. The Munda head form occupies an intermediate position between the Kharia-Lodha forming the lower scale and the Bhumij-Santal forming the upper scale. The Lodha shows lower mean values in the majority of the characters than the Munda-Bhumij-Santal group and some

of the values are further lower in the case of the Kharia. The close affinity between the Lodha and the Kharia is evidenced by the significantly lower values of *t* in 8 out of 15 characters, which appear to show that the Lodha and the Kharia are close congeners. The greatest difference lies in the facial region. The Lodha possess a larger bigonial breadth than the Kharia, whereas the bizygomatic breadth is much greater in the latter than in the former. This change in the facial contour is difficult to interpret. The strong development of the lower jaw may be attributed to change in Lodha food habits, but this change should have influenced the maxillary pillars as well. The influence of hybridization cannot also be ruled out. The frequency of disharmonic faces among the Lodha may here be mentioned. They show 27.5% of dolichocephaly with euryprosopy and 2% of brachycephaly with leptoprosopy.

TABLE 24
*Comparative Study of Means with Standard Error of Means
of the Lodha, Veddah and Kharia.*

S. N.	Character	Veddah	Lodha	Kharia
1	Max. head length	18.22±0.14	18.18±0.05	18.29±0.07
2	Max. head breadth	13.28±0.11	13.79±0.03	13.61±0.05
3	Head height	12.29±0.17	11.93±0.08	11.58±0.06
4	Least fr. breadth	10.31±0.11	10.20±0.03	10.02±0.05
5	Bizygom. breadth	11.74±0.13	12.19±0.04	12.96±0.05
6	Bigonial breadth	9.37±0.15	9.99±0.04	9.10±0.05
7	Nasal height	4.75±0.11	4.52±0.02	4.45±0.05
8	Nasal breadth	3.65±0.05	3.86±0.02	3.98±0.03
9	Total facial height	10.66±0.05	10.59±0.04	10.61±0.10
10	Hd. circumference	15.18±1.01	54.95±0.10	—
11	Stature	152.54±0.12	159.13±0.44	156.10±0.06

TABLE 25
*Test of Significance : Difference of Means and Values of *t*.*

S. N.	Character	Lodha-Veddah		Kharia-Veddah	
		Diff.	Value	Diff.	Value
1	Max. head length	0.04	0.28	0.07	0.44
2	Max. head breadth	0.51	4.63	0.33	2.75
3	Head height	0.36	2.00	0.71	3.94
4	Least fr. breadth	0.11	1.00	0.29	2.63
5	Bizygom. breadth	0.45	3.46	1.22	9.38

TABLE 25—(Contd.)
Test of Significance : Difference of Means and Values of t

S. N.	Character	Lodha-Veddah		Kharia-Veddah	
		Diff.	Value	Diff.	Value
6	Bigonial breadth	0.62	4.13	0.27	1.80
7	Nasal height	0.23	2.09	0.30	2.54
8	Nasal breadth	0.21	4.20	0.26	5.20
9	Total facial ht.	0.07	1.16	0.02	0.18
10	Hd. circumference	1.77	6.04	—	—
11	Stature	6.59	14.97	3.56	27.38
<i>Indexes</i>					
1	Length-breadth index	3.40	4.65	2.03	2.81
2	Length-height index	2.03	2.07	3.34	3.59
3	Nasal index	8.34	4.29	11.48	5.44
4	Total facial index	8.39	6.82	8.59	6.45

The next point of interest is the low metric values of the Lodha-Kharia group in comparison with the Munda-Santal group. Some of the characters, e. g., head length, head height least frontal breadth nasal height and total facial height of the Lodha show a lower mean than even the Veddah (Sarkar 1954). The only exception is in the bigonial breadth of the Lodha which is slightly higher than in the Munda-Santal group. The Lodha occupies an intermediate position between the Munda and the Santal in stature. We have already tried to account for this condition of the stature.

It is difficult to interpret the above fact and only a few possible suggestions can be made here before further researches along these lines bring forth the correct answer. For this purpose the Lodha and the Kharia data have been compared with the Veddah data of Osman Hill (Sarkar 1954).

Table 24 shows the comparative mean values of the Veddah, Lodha and the Kharia, while Table 25 shows the difference of the means and their corresponding values of t .

Table 25 clearly shows that the Kharia is closely related to the Veddah in more characters than the Lodha. The greatest difference is seen in stature ($t=27.38$) and the next value of 9.38 in the case of bizygomatic breadth. It is interesting, however, that the Veddah possesses a higher mean head height than both the Kharia and the Lodha, and whether the increase

in the statures of the later two is related to the decrease in their head height is a matter of detailed enquiry. There is a general agreement in head form, while the Kharia agrees with the Veddah in both the length and breadth of the head, the Lodha agrees with the latter in length and height. It is worthwhile pointing out that the difference in head breadth between the Lodha and the Veddah is almost of the same magnitude as that in the case of head height between the Kharia and the Veddah. The importance of L-A index has been mentioned already. Among the groups compared here, only the Neddah and the Lodha agree very closely not only in L-H index but also in both the head length and head height. No other group shows this triple agreement. This triple agreements is again seen in the head length, head breadth and length-breadth index of the Kharia and the Veddah. In head length, too, only the Kharia-Lodha-Veddah groups show an unitary agreement. It is therefore not out of place to assign the Kharia-Lodha head within the Veddah head form. The Mundari groups, although showing an agreement in L-H index are very far removed in head length. The agreement in head breadth appears to have occurred later, though nothing conclusive can be said at present. The three groups agree with one another in the form of the frontal bone, while the difference in the bizygomatic breadth is greater between the Veddah and the Lodha. The Kharia however agrees with the Veddah in respect of bigonal breadth, while the Lodha stands apart in this character. This point has already been discussed. In nasal height the three groups are closely related to one another, as will be evident from the values of t , while the Mundari groups are further removed. The differences in nasal breadth are again noteworthy and show an inverse relationship with the Veddah. While the nasal length of the Kharia and Lodha has decreased from that of the Veddah, the nasal breadth of the former two groups has undergone an increase. The agreement in total facial height again supports the close relationship between the three groups. It will, therefore, be seen that the Kharia-Lodha group shows closer resemblance with the Veddah in respect of some basic

characters, such as head form, least frontal breadth, nasal length and total facial length than the Mundari groups. The basic stratum of the Kharia-Lodha group appears therefore to be Veddids, and the changes they have undergone in stature and other characters, such as bizygomatic breadth etc., appear to be due to other factors. The greatest probability is intermixture with Mundari peoples. A submerged Veddids element has long been suspected among the central Indian aborigines and Sarkar (1954) is of opinion that the Veddids were at one time widespread over eastern India. The Kharia appears to show more of the Veddids type than the Lodha who is more acculturated than the former.*

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I

The Mundas are one of the 'Kolian'* groups of people inhabiting mainly the Chotanagpur plateau. Ranchi district in Bihar State is the principal home of the Mundas and they generally occupy the southern, south-western and eastern parts of this district. Now they are found to have migrated to the adjoining states. In West Bengal especially their number is not insignificant. It is now about 1,60,245, of which 78,516 are males and 81,729 are females; the information is provided by Census Report of 1961. But in the Census Report of 1951, their number was stated to be 82,923. This sudden increase in the number of this tribe has been explained by the superintendent of Census Operations in the following words: "It is hardly possible to ascribe specific reasons to these variations, but a part of it seems to have been caused by such indeterminate factors as confusion over names, ignorance of the respondent, personal equation of the enumerators."

The name "Munda" is Sanskrit in origin. "It means headman of a village, and is a titular or functional designation used by the members of the tribe, as well as by outsiders." They call themselves 'Horo-Ko' (man or human being). Roy traces their

* Most of the early writers described them as 'Kolarians'. Dalton (18) classifies the Mundas as Kolarians along with the Hos, Bhumijes, Juangs, Kharias, Santals, Bihors, Morwas, Kura and Kurkus or Muasis. Risley (1872) described the Mundas as Kolarian group of people. S. C. Roy (1912) considered them as members of the so-called Kolarian tribes inhabiting the Chota Nagpur Division (P. 355). If they are treated as a 'Kol' group of people, they should rightly be called 'Kolian'. Prof. S. K. Chatterjee (1923) objects to use the term Kolarian to identify Mundari group of people.

original home to a distant "land of eighty-one uplands and eighty three elevated rice fields"—a celebrated tradition handed down in the Mundari legend (Roy 1912, : 10). Besides, the name of their traditional god 'Marang Buru' connotes a 'great mountain,' and this indicates their possible homeland.

The Mundas are good agriculturists and they brought the lands, where they settled, under cultivation. Their wanderings and migrations at later stages, were possibly due to their search for good cultivable lands and better occupations and, at the same time, to the pressure exerted on them by one of their more vigorous neighbouring communities the Oraons. Sometime during such migrations, they settled in West Bengal which fringes the Ranchi plateau. Three distinct zones of their migration can be categorised, on the basis of ecological differences, as (1) the West Midnapur region, which is an extension of the Chotanagpur plateau, where migration was easy and spontaneous ; (2) the region of lower Bengal, specially 24-Parganas, where they came early as indigo-plantation labourers, and later were recruited as a hewers of wood and drawers of water" in the jungles of the Sunderbans ; and (3) the North Bengal region, where they were recruited as plantation labourer. *They came there in successive waves and later on cleared some regions round about the tea estates forming satellite villages. They did some casual labour at plantations, supplemented by agriculture.*

II

The writer attempts in this paper to note some aspects of the social structure, specially clan distribution and lineage and sub-lineage organizations. For detailed investigation, he studied altogether 19 villages covering in this respect representative portions of West Bengal. He laid however more stress on Munda villages in Midnapur. Table 1 provides the details of the study.

TABLE 1
Munda Villages (Family and population)*

S. N.	District	S. N.	Name of the Village.	No. of families.	Mate	Population Female	Total
1	Midaapur	1	Alkushia	20	43	37	80
		2	Auspal	4	11	11	22
		3	Bikrampur	32	91	102	193
		4	Chandri	32	80	80	160
		5	Chutia	15	31	38	69
		6	Daharpur	84	237	249	486
		7	Dehagnanj	46	94	99	193
		8	Kumardoha	9	22	25	47
		9	Laudah	16	33	41	74
		10	Maraikhuti	71	141	145	286
		11	Sujapur	30	93	79	172
		12	Taldanga	20	51	52	103
		13	Talbetal	22	48	56	104
		14	Telkond	46	121	121	242
		15	Tulsibani	30	92	75	167
2	24-Parganas	16	Kumirmari	28	67	76	143
		17	Tetultali	37	102	80	182
3	Jalpaiguri	18	Bandapani	40	98	98	196
			Tea Estate				
4	Darjeeling	19	Malaguri	5	14	7	21

* It is to be noted here that the writer started to work in the Munda-concentrated villages of Daharpur and Telkand, where the numbers of Munda families were 46 and 84 respectively (1964). But very recently it was found that the number of families along with population has increased. The numbers of families, at present are 116 and 51 respectively. Clans and lineages have been considered from the recent figures.

III

The Mundas are a patrilineal tribe. Risley observed thirteen sub-tribes among them. These are according to him—(1) Kharia-Munda, (2) Karanga-Munda, (3) Kol-Munda, (4) Mahali-Munda, (5) Oraon-Munda, (6) Savar-Munda—possibly crossing with the neighbouring tribes, (7) Bhuinhar-Munda, (8) Manki-Munda, (9) Khangar-Munda, (10) Kongpat-Munda, (11) Nagbanshi-Munda, (12) Munda-Manjhi, and (13) Sad-Munda—so named possibly due to the association of the tribe with a particular locality or status.

TABLE 2
Distribution of Clans

Names of Villages																				
Sl. No.	Clean names	Alku-shia	Aus-pal	B.k-ram-pur	Chan-dri	Chutia	Daharpur	Deheganj	Kumardoba	Laudab	Maraikhuntli	Sajapur	Talanga	Talbetal	Telkond	Tulsibani	Kumirmari	Tetutalli	Bandapani Tea Estate	Malaguri
1.	Bagh				2						1	1	4		1					9
2.	Bautkumar																	6		6
3.	Barla																3			3
4.	Bara												1				1			2
5.	Chuntia																	8		8
6.	Champa								1											1
7.	Chandra																	1		1
8.	Chandil	1		2	3	1	7			2	3		5		17	2	2			45
9.	Chaudal							18			2									21
10.	Luti										1									1
11.	Dhanawar																	7		7
12.	Demta																	1		1
13.	Deuria																			1
14.	Ghusur				1															1
15.	Gurcha														1					1
16.	Guti							3												3
17.	Hembram	5						2			1							2	2	14
18.	Harikahki																			24
19.	Hanuar																			2
20.	Hansa																		6	6
21.	Haridwar																	1	4	5
22.	Induar																			1
23.	Jew						1													1
24.	Jaypakhi				3		4													7
25.	Kundulna												1							1
26.	Kapila																			1
27.	Kechua																	1	5	6
28.	Kechim								1											1
29.	Keshal																		3	3
30.	Karra																	1		1
31.	Kausalya																2			2
32.	Karaparti																	1		1
33.	Keyata	2																		2
34.	Kuiya						3													3
35.	Luthi			1													1			2
36.	Murud												2							2
37.	Mugi										1									1
38.	Madhu	1																		1
39.	Nag			3	5	6	25		3	3	28	3		16		13	6			109
40.	Nayek																			3
41.	Padma						11										2			13
42.	Pencha						1	5									1			7
43.	Phinge							3												4
44.	Saral				4		4		3	2	7	2				1	4			22
45.	Sandil	1		2			2						4			6				15
46.	Sangar																	8		8
47.	Salmach						10			4		3					4			21
48.	Surjamukhi							8			2	4								14
49.	Snard											10								10
50.	Sirai			12																12
51.	Siti					4														11
52.	Sapoar																1	1		2
53.	Sankha						15			3										18
54.	Singh						1													1
55.	Tapor																	9		9
56.	Taraya						3													3
57.	Thesa	9	4		7	4		2	1		9	3		5		9				53
58.	Tuti/Chupi	1			4			4												5
59.	Tao				3		29	4		1	13					10	1			61
60.	Tirki																	1		1
61.	Uagar Sanrdi			12					1											13
62.	Buriuli																		3	3
63.	Purti																			3
64.	Ulda																			4
65.	Sayoio																			1
66.	Dukria																			3
67.	Bandra																			1
68.	Deogam																			1
69.	Mundula																			1
70.	Family Clan	20	4	32	32	15	116	45	9	16	71	30	20	22	51	30	28	37	40	5
		7	1	6	9	4	14	9	5	7	12	9	5	3	8	9	11	9	11	5

Note. In table 2 only clans of the head of the families have been considered. In the case of widows, their husbands' clans have been recorded. It reveals that they possess 71 clans.

Like most of the tribal people of India, the Mundas are divided into a number of clans or *Kilis*. Risley gave a long list of the *Kilis*. The members of the *Kilis* associate themselves with some particular totems which are either plant, animal or natural bodies. There are many stories regarding the origin of these totems and their association with such groups. S. C. Roy referred to 36 clans and accepted the gradual sub-division of the clans, when they dispersed different tracts of the country. He also narrated a number of stories relating to gradual changes in the names of the clans as well as the division of the clans. He also suggested that—"This sub-division was probably effected to avoid the necessity of the members of one *Kili* having to travel a long way off into the domain of another *Kili* to seek wives for their sons or husbands of their daughters." (op. cit., 405).

Though the origin of the *Kili* or gotra names is fabulous and unrealistic, yet one can easily realize the inter-connection of the members of the *gotra* with that of the totem. Generally a clan meant a consanguineous kinship either genealogically or fictionally definable. This is applicable to the Mundas of other districts except those of Midnapur. However a few interesting stories regarding the origin of the clan are given here to show its unrealistic connection with the totem and the clan members.

Regarding the origin of the *Kachhlm* (Kachchna) clan there is a story prevalent here and it slightly differs from that of the account of Roy. Once, due to sudden flood, a number of men and other animals were carried away by strong currents. It was so intense that everybody was frantically striving to get on to a piece of hard soil somehow. At that time a man saw a tortoise near a bush of reeds. He got afraid and gradually lost his sense. At the same time the tortoise also got afraid. Then all on a sudden the tortoise dipped into the water and disappeared and crawled on to the other side of the stream. There he found another man coming to him. Out of fear the tortoise again dipped and came to the place where the unconscious man remained floating on the water. The man

who tried to catch the tortoise followed it and all on a sudden found that another man was floating there. Then he removed the man out of water and gradually by nursing him, brought him back to consciousness. Then he understood that due to the tortoise he has been saved by a fellow-man and from that time he considered tortoise as his saviour and all his family members pay regular respect to it. It is considered by the members of that family as an incarnation of god.

The members of each clan observe certain restrictions in respect of a totem. They do not kill, injure or even touch their respective totemic objects. Violation of such taboos is considered as a serious sin by the clan-members. All the clan are patrilineal. There is prevalence of fictional consanguineous kinship among the members of each clan. The Mundas of West Bengal describe clans as *gotras* and this is possibly due to Hindu influence.

In course of fieldwork it was observed that the clans of the Mundas of Midnapur are not strictly exogamous, though they adhere to other conventional taboos and restrictions. In respect of marriage, the members of the tribe emphasize *Banshas*, i. e. lineages. These are considered exogamic units. Table 2 describes the details concerning the clan distribution of the tribe; Table 3 totem affiliation and Table 4 types of totems.

Roy also traced the transformation of *Kili* or *gotra* names as having been due to Hindu influence. Practically the Mundas due to their prolonged contact with the Hindus have given up many customs which the other neighbouring communities prefer (eating of beef and pork). This compelled them even to change their clan names and to come nearer to the Hindu caste system with a definite better social status. Thus the members of the *Chandil* (Meteor) clan try to identify them with *Sandil* or *Sandilya*, a *gotra*-name of the Hindus, named after the sage Sandilya. The members of the *Kachim* or *Kachhua* (tortoise) or *Kachchap gotra* identify themselves with that of Kashyapa, a *gotra* name of the Hindus derived out from the sage Kashyapa.

TABLE 3
Clan and Totem

S. N.	Clan	Totem
1	Bagh	Tiger
2	Bhutkumar	..
3	Baria	..
4	Bera	A kind of snake
5	Chuntia	Rat
6	Champa	A kind of flower
7	Chandra	Moon
8	Chandil	Meteor
9	Chandal	..
10	Luti	..
11	Dhanwar	Strainer to remove chaps
12	Demta	..
13	Deuria	..
14	Ghusur	Pig
15	Gurcha	A kind of fruit
16	Guti	Earthen ball for playing
17	Hemram	A kind of fruit
18	Harikanki	A kind of bird
19	Hanaur	..
20	Hansa	Swan
21	Haridwar	..
22	Indur	Rat
23	Jew	A kind of bird
24	Jaypakhi	..
25	Kundulna	..
26	Kapila	Cow
27	Kenchua	Earthworm
28	Kachim	Tortoise
29	Kashal	..
30	Karra	Buffalo
31	Kausaiya	A kind of bird
32	Karapatri	..
33	Keyata	..
34	Kuiya	Tiger
35	Luthi	Small ant
36	Murud	A kind of flower (plasy)
37	Mugi	Cereal
38	Madhu	Honey
39	Nag	Serpent
40	Nayer	..
41	Padma	Lotus

TABLE 3 (Contd.)
Clan and Totem

S. N	Clan	Totem
42	Pencha	Owe
43	Phinge	A kind of bird
44	Saral	Saral
45	Sandil	Meteor (?)
46	Sangor	..
47	Salmacha	A kind of fish
48	Surjamukhi	A kind of flower
49	Snard	Bull
50	Sirai	A kind of fish
51	Sili	..
52	Sapoar	..
53	Sankha	Conch
54	Singh	Lion
55	Tapor	Crown
56	Taraya/Turkuri	Lotus
57	Thesa	A kind of bird
58	Tuti	A kind of flower
59	Tao	A bird with blue colour
60	Tirki	..
61	Ugalsanri	..
62	Buruili	Mango
63	Purti	..
64	Ulda	One kind of tree
65	Sayaio	..
66	Dukria	Knee (human body)
67	Bandra	Monkey
68	Deogam	A kind of bird
69	Munduia	Belly (Human body)

Regarding classification of the totem, Table 4 has been prepared out of Table 3.

Table 4
Classification of the Totem

S. N.	Classification	Dalton (1872)	Risley (1892)	Roy (1912)	Bhowmick (1971)
1	Plant		86	10	12
2	Animal		155	15	29
3	Heavenly Bodies		4	—	3
4	Inanimate objects		15	—	4
5	Unclassified		50	11	—
6	Human body		—	—	2
7	Not Known		28	—	19
	Total		338	36	69

IV

It has been stated earlier that the *Banshas* or lineages play an important role in regulating marriage. This lineage is not found among the Mundas of 24-Parganas, Jalpaiguri or Darjeeling districts of West Bengal. This is only prevalent among the Mundas of the district of Midnapur. During his survey in 15 villages of Midnapur, the author traced 41 clans, of which 24 have got only one lineage, 6 clans have 2 lineages each; 2 clans have 3 lineages each; 1 clan has 4 lineages; 1 clan has 5 lineages; 1 clan has 6 lineages; 1 clan has 7 lineages; 1 clan has 9 lineages; 1 clan has 16 lineages; 2 clans have 18 lineages each, and 1 clan has 24 lineages. Particulars of the lineage and clan affiliation have been shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5
Clan and Lineage affiliation
(Number of Sub-lineages is in the parenthesis)

S. N.	Clan	No. of lineage	Lineages	Total
1	Nayek	1	Ghatwal (0)	
2	Sili		Jabla (0)	
3	Murgi		Lohahatu (0)	
4	Kapila		Pameya (0)	
5	Luti		Sigid (0)	
6	Murud		Telwari (0)	
7	Gunrcha		Turda (0)	
8	Jiw		Bakar Kurid (Keshari) (1)	
9	Luthi		Sindri (1)	
10	Harikanki		Chunchuria (1)	
11	Kachhim		Garakisan (1)	
12	Bara		Edel	
13	Ghusur		Kudra (1)	
14	Guti		Kudra (1)	
15	Champa		Birgam (2)	
16	Singh		Burda (2)	
17	Ugalsnari		Pata (2)	
18	Kausalya		Saray Bargaon (4)	
19	Madhu		Satbhaiya (5)	
20	Kuiya		Kudra (6)	
21	Taraya		Rela (6)	
22	Snar		Bakru (7)	
23	Sirai		Bakru (7)	
24	Kayta		Bakru (7)	24

TABLE 5 (Contd.)
Clan and Lineage affiliation
(Number of Sub-lineages is in the parenthesis)

S. N.	Clan	No. of lineage	Lineages	Total
25	Chaudal	2	Baradi (0) Patapukuridulmi (3)	
26	Phinga		Chogalan (0), Bukru (7)	
27	Sankh		Telwari (0), Harad (5)	
28	Padma		Patra (1), Turkundi (6)	
29	Pencha		Kakru (1), Kakar (3)	
30	Tuti/Chupi		Buru (0), Kanchi Thakur (2)	6
31	Suryamukhi	3	Hnesha(0), Karihensa(0), Snebali(6)	
32	Hemrom		Chhalidajam Lahar Chandama-sina (1), Samadi (1), Turda (2)	2
33	Sandil	4	Hajam (1), Jari (4), Thakur (6), Bakru (7)	1
34	Bagh	5	Atni (0), Hnesla (0), Khemteya (0), Kulajanga (1), Kudra (6)	1
35	Jaypakhi	6	Datam(0), Jhajri(0), Patar (2), Kadru (1), Changarda (1), Kudra (6)	1
36	Salmachh	7	Haramro (0), Pel (0), Dadu (1), Gadakisan (1), Silithakur (3), Ard-katithakur (4), Ghagra (5)	1
37	Saral	9	Ladunb (0), Pata Ashda (0), Udu (1), Sijubarli (0), Tadang(0), Uhatu (0), Rugri (1), Ubstuthakur (2), Bakru (7)	1
38	Thesa	16	Chakamuri (0), Deuri (0), Icha (0), Ilu (0), Jhajri(0), Masna (0), Chaka (1), Kedaru (1), Sunkarpikiapiri (0), Samadi (1), Patar (2), Buruhatu Chauka (2), Jaj (4), Tunturi (3), Sarmali (6), Thakur (6)	1
39	Chandil	18	Bulungbaradi (0), Khelari (0), Situ (0), Siliroy (0), Tunturi (0), Suisa (1), Chaka (1), Birgam (2), Janbuda (2), Harin (2), Sarjam (6), Harad (5), Satbhaiya (5), Dulmi (5), Thakur (6), Tud (6), Bakru (7), Janumpidibadu (1)	
40	Tao	18	Bakarkurid (0), Chnar (0), Datam (0), Jagda (0), Londra (0), Marcha (0), Sapa (0), Suri (0), Ganrua (1), Patar (2), Jnabuda (2), Dumura (2), Pata (2), Sarjam (6), Chamdu (4), Sarmali(6), Thakur (6), Churki (6)	2
41	Nag	24	Bansam (0), Chnar (0), Ilu (0), Keda(0), Knidi (0), Kakrudigar(0), Pande (0), Sarugera(0), Serendi (0), Tutki (1), Chaka (1), Edel (1), Ganrua (1), Saraya (2), Kukru (1), Jnabuda (2), Sarjam (6), Bare (0), Harad (5), Satbhaiya (5), Bukru (7), Baroanr (0), Lota (0)	1
Total :		113		41

It has been observed that most of the clan names are associated with plants, animals, heavenly bodies or inanimate objects, though quite a number of names cannot be meaningfully understood. But in case of the lineages, where no meaning can be traced, the members of the lineages bear it along with its sub-lineages, if any, just to avoid connubial relationship belonging to same lineage. This exogamous marriage rule strictly defines the character of the lineages. The members consider that they are related by a common tie of blood relationship and have descended in one line from a common ancestress. According to some old informants, each of these lineage-names has been coined from the woman who is considered as the ancestress of that particular group.

These lineages are not uniformly distributed in all the villages, and there is neither social hierarchy nor any privileges enjoyed by any of the group.

These lineages again have been grouped together according to the number of sub-lineages associated with them. Table 6 gives the details of the groupings.

TABLE 6
Grouping of the Lineages

S. N.	No. of Sub-lineages	
1	With seven sub-lineages	1
2	With six sub-lineages	8
3	With five sub-lineages	3
4	With four sub-lineages	5
5	With three sub-lineages	4
6	With two sub-lineages	12
7	With one sub-lineage	24
8	Without sub-lineage	50
	Total.	107

The sub-lineages are known as *thok*. The large lineages having many sub-lineages can be referred as 'maximal lineage.' Table 7 gives details of the lineages along with associated sub-lineages with them.

TABLE 7
Sub-lineages within the lineages

S. N.	Name of lineage	No. of sub-lineage	Name of the sub-lineages
1	Bakru	7	Lohahatu, Siju, Malida, Todang, Bundu, Haramro, Soma
2	Rela	6	Sasa, Sarmali, Ludra, Churki, Kushaldi, Chirgaldi
3	Snebali	6	Suisa, Babuali, Parta, Marcha, Sasa, Patabali
4	Churki	6	Rela, Kudra, Sasa, Sarmali, Hne-seidi, Kushaldi
5	Tud	6	Turkundi, Putkuino, Churiang, Tudturiang, Chudturiang, Tunturi
6	Turkendi	6	Tud, Tuntuni, Puntkuino, Churiang, Tudturiang, Chudturiang
7	Kudra	6	Rela, Churki, Sasa, Sarmala, Hne-selpi, Kusaldi
8	Thakur	6	Uhatu, Kali, Syamala, Kanchi, Arkali, Sili
9	Sarjam	6	Suva, Chuti, Dhadru, Datam, Chuti Sarjam, Banga, Sarjam
10	Satbhaiya	5	Samadi, Chuturpa, Paramjareya, Edrong, Anriapata
11	Dulmi	5	Bongadar, Jeg, Chhatapakhri, G0asidi, Ikir
12	Harad	5	Suba, Chuti, Tirul, Khiri, Tamaku
13	Arkali Thakur	4	Kali, Sili, Lohahatu, Uhatu
14	Jari	4	Gugui, Mugui, Muraguma, Patkam
15	Chamdu	4	Baragaon, Thorpa, Dadal, Adrapatra
16	Saray-Bargaon	4	Harat, Kukru, Ilu, Garakisan
17	Jaj		Gamaria, Ichaabaa, Suba, Jaj Bukru
18	Sili Thakur	3	Silitutki, Katsili, Patsili
19	Patapukri-Dulmi	3	Baradi, Baksa, Bangadulmi
20	Tuntuni	3	Bagmuri, Tantan, Turda
21	Kakar	3	Sapa, Marang, Huding
22	Buruhatu Chaka	2	Uhatu Chauka, Patkam Chauka
23	Pata	2	Hnesla, Dugda
24	Burda	2	Bukadi, Uludiri
25	Dumura	2	Loyadumura, Marangdumura
26	Uhatu Thakur	2	Arkali Thakur, Sili Thakur
27	Harin	2	Marang Harin, Banku Harin
28	Jnabuda	2	Girguri, Gulgu
29	Kanchi Thakur	2	Bundu, Bakru

TABLE 7—(Contd)
Sub-lineages within the lineage

S N.	Name of lineage	No. of Sub-lineage	Name of the sub-lineages
30	Turda	2	Tuntuni, Tantan
31	Birgam	2	Saahatu, Jirling
32	Saraya	2	Khiri, Saraybarangi
33	Patar	2	Tuina, Buruhaticbaita
34	Kundra	1	Bundu
35	Gnarua	1	Udu
36	Edel	1	Ghatwali
37	Garakisan	1	Kondakata gadakisan
38	Samadi	1	Anriapata
39	Kukru	1	Digar
40	Chaka	1	Chauli
41	Changarda	1	Jaaburda
42	Kadru	1	Kedaru
43	Suisa	1	Snebali suisa
44	Chunchuria	1	Tunturi
45	Kulajanga	1	Hnesla
46	Chhalidajamlahar- Chandamasina	1	Khatmasina
47	Sindri	1	Sindrup
48	Chada	1	Kudachada
49	Haradi	1	Baradi
50	Hajam	1	Banta
51	Udu	1	Guarua
52	Janampiri-Badu	1	Kukidulmi
53	Ruguri	1	Patar
54	Tutki	1	Sili
55	Patra	1	Adrapatra
56	Keshari	1	Bakarkurid
57	Dadu	1	Badu
	(No. sublineage names)		
58	U-hatu		
59	Turda		
60	Telwari		
61	Tadang		
62	Tunturi		
63	Sunkarpi-kiapiri		
64	Siliray		
65	Situ		
66	Sigid		
67	Serendi		

TABLE 7—(Contd)

Sub-lineages within the lineage

S. N.	Name of lineage	No. of Sub-lineage	Name of the sub-lineages
68	Sijubarli		
69	Snuri		
70	Sarugera		
71	Sapa		
72	Pameya		
73	Patasda		
74	Pande		
75	Marcha		
76	Masna		
77	Loahatu		
78	Lota		
79	Lodra		
80	Landub		
81	Kukrudigar		
82	Khelari		
83	Haramro		
84	Kuindi		
85	Khemteya		
86	Kera		
87	Karihensa		
88	Jagda		
89	Jabla		
90	Jhajri		
91	Ilu		
92	Icha		
93	Hnesla		
94	Ghatwal		
95	Denri		
96	Datam		
97	Chagalan		
98	Chakamuri		
99	Chuar		
100	Bulungbaradi		
101	Budu		
102	Bare		
103	Baradi		
104	Bansam		
105	Baroanr		
106	Bakarkurid		
107	Atani		

The members of the sub-lineages of a lineage refer to themselves as *Pata bhai*,* i.e. brothers-in-alignment. They think that they are brothers and they have very close blood-relationship. It may be considered in this connection if the Mundas had ever tried to emulate in their way of thinking the idea behind *Samanodaka* and *Sapinda* relationship of the Hindus, among whom marriage is prohibited.

A few informants told the writer that these "*thoks*" are named after an individual male ancestor of each sub-division, and each member can trace explicitly his genealogical connection with those ancestors.

So far as the names of the lineages are concerned, it has been reported that these are derived from the names of the women who were married successively to a number of men. As a result, the generations of each successive union affiliate themselves with the male ancestors of the couple so formed. Hence, members of all these sub-lineages (*thok*) of a particular lineage (*Bansha*) recognize them as 'brothers in alignment', called *Patabhais*, among whom marriage is strictly forbidden. It has been found that these sub-lineages belong to different clans, and this differentiation does not encourage them to marry in the group. Thus clan exogamy does not hold true here. Alternatively, marriage in the same clan is not rare, because the marrying couple belong to different lineages. For example, Birbal Singh of village Telkond belongs to *Sandil* clan, but *Jari* lineage. His wife belongs to the same clan, but a different lineage called *Bakru*. Such is the case with Budha Singh of village Chandri, who belongs to the *Thesa* clan. His wife is the daughter of Panchanan Singh, who also belongs to *Thesa* clan. But Budhu belongs to *Patar* lineage whereas Panchanan belongs to *Jabri* lineage. Of course, sub-lineages are also different in all these cases. Hence, marriage is valid and the question of clan exogamy does not arise. Naturally, the descendants of these sub-lineages consider the

* The Mundas also use *dudhbhai*, i.e. 'milk brother' to denote foster-brothers. They are the children of different mothers but of same father. They are male agnates. The *dudhbhais* have to share many rites in common along with the observance of death pollution period whereas in case of *Patabhai*, no such restrictions are found except marriage.

names of these male ancestors as their progenitors' names. Yet they cannot ignore the common tie—the woman or wife of these persons from whom the name of the lineage has been coined. These marriages and re-marriages, as they said, were due to successive death of the husbands, or desertion by them. Of course, this explanation cannot be verified.

It will be observed from Table 7 that a number of lineages have common sub-lineage names. It is very difficult to suggest whether these same sub-lineage names were derived from a common individuals. Some informants told the writer that the individuals of the common sub-lineage names belonging to different lineage can intermarry.

TABLE 8
Distribution of Lineages in Clans

S. N.	Lineage	No. of clans	Name of the clans
1	Birgam	2	Chandil, Champa
2	Datam	2	Tao, Jaypakhi
3	Pata	2	Tao, Ugalsnari
4	Chnar	2	Tao, Nag
5	Patar	2	Thesa, Jaypakhi
6	Ilu	2	Nag, Thesa
7	Sarmali	2	Thesa, Tao
8	Jhajri	2	Jaypakhi, Thesa
9	Harad	3	Nag, Chandil, Tao
10	Kudra	3	Bagh, Kuiya, Jaypakhi
11	Jnabuda	3	Nag, Chandil, Tao
12	Sarjam	3	Nag, Chandil, Tao
13	Thakur	4	Sandil, Chandil, Tao, Thesa
14	Bakru	8	Snar, Sandil, Chandil, Nag, Sirai, Saral, Phinga, Kayta

Table 8 is prepared out of Table 5 to show the distribution of lineages into different clans. It will be seen that 14 lineages are associated with 2 or more than 2 clans. Different clans associated with a particular lineage are never intermarrying groups. For example, a member of the *Chandil* clan must not marry a member of the *Champa* clan, because these are associated with common *Birgam* lineage. Conversely, *Chandil* clan associated with *Birgam* lineage can marry *Chandil* clan associated with *Harad*, *Jnabuda*, *Sarjam*, *Thakur* and *Bukru* lineages.

VII

It has been shown that the Mundas of Midnapur reveal a social organization in which the tribe is divided into a few clans or *gotras* (not exogamous) and these clans are composed, in most cases, of a fairly large number of lineages, i. e. *Banshas*. These lineages are sub-divided into a number of sub-lineages of *thoks*. The lineages, with all their sub-lineages, are strictly exogamous. i.e. no Munda will marry in the same lineage or in the sub-lineage groups of the same lineage, though these sub-lineages belong to different clans.

This type of social structure has been formed possibly due to various reasons. The Mundas are not considered to be the autochthonous of the Chotanagpur plateau. They migrated from one place to another at different times and in course of their long marches, they had to face many adverse situations. If they were considered as an invading groups (S.C. Roy refers to their sporadic wars), then possibly they had a small number of women with them. This numerical disparity compelled them to secure mates from other tribal communities, eventually giving rise to sub-tribes (This was described by Risley). It is to be noted in this connection, that primitive peoples have 'closed societies' and they think of themselves as 'human being' or 'man' or 'Hor'. Others are 'Dikus' or 'aliens'. It is undoubtedly a serious violation when this sentiment was disturbed by selecting a mate from outside the in-group. This tolerance is due possibly to the small number of women migrating with them or for some other reasons. If a smaller number of women in the horde prevailed at that time, then the women of the Munda community could have been treated as more valuable than anything else. So one woman was not allowed to be forsaken or to remain a widow after the death of her first husband. As a result, a divorced or widowed woman was re-married several times. Then she became the 'root' or 'common-tie' or *Bansha*, i. e. lineage, from whom a number of families, having sub-lineages, sprung up.

Thus it is quite possible that lineage names were coined from her. In the same way, names of the sub-lineages may have been coined from the persons who re-married her. Among

these sub-lineages also, we find a hierarchy, i. e. a few sub-lineages consider themselves superior to the others. This is perhaps due either to the relative status or position of the man forging union with the woman by regular or *Sangā* marriage, or to the fact of seniority in marriage and re-marriage.

According to Beattie, "when clans are dispersed, they do not of course, form local corporate groups. Where co-operating local groups larger than elementary families of spouses and their children are organised on the basis of shared descent in one line, anthropologist usually speak of unilineal descent groups or lineages." He also states—"Unilineal descent is used as the basis of local grouping and corporate activity in many societies, which lack centralised government." (Beattie 1968, 99).

Under such circumstances, it was possible for the Mundas to be divided into a large number of lineages and sub-lineages. Conversely, regarding the origin of the lineages and sub-lineages, it can be said that the migrating Mundas with a band of a single clan, had no other alternative but to marry among themselves, with the exception of course of the primary and secondary relatives (Murdock 1960, 14). It has been observed that Bhanja Purans of Orissa marry in the same clan but avoid common surnames. It was thus that in marrying Munda clans, in course of time, gave rise to various lineages and sub-lineages. It could therefore be suggested that further study in Munda-concentrated areas will throw more light, not only on their social structure, but also on the nature of their migrations.

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7. *EMERGING PROBLEMS OF THE SCHEDULED CASTES IN WEST BENGAL*¹

The problem of the scheduled castes is a general problem for the whole of India. The Scheduled Castes, as all of us know, constitute a large section of the population and they have suffered through centuries economically and socially. The total population of India is 54, 79, 49,809, according to 1971 census, of which the scheduled castes constitute 14.60 percent, their population being 7,99,95,896. It may be mentioned here that the term 'Scheduled Castes' is an administrative innovation. The term was used for the first time in the Government of India Act, 1935. In April 1936, the British Government issued the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order 1936, specifying certain castes, races and tribes as Scheduled Castes in the then provinces of Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Bombay, Central Provinces and Berar, Madras, Orissa, Punjab and the United Provinces. Prior to that, these castes were generally known as the "Depressed Castes". The "Depressed Castes" were systematically categorised in 1931 by Hutton, the then Census Commissioner of India.

The Constitution of the Republic of India, wedded to the ideals of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, has taken over the term of the Scheduled Castes in appreciation of the need for assisting a section of the Indian Community, which has been lagging behind the other sections, in catching up the latter in their onward march to progress and has made many special provisions for these backward communities which have been scheduled for administrative purpose. The President of India in accordance with Article 341 of the Indian Constitution where he has been empowered to make initial notification of the lists

of the scheduled castes, notified the list (vide Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950 (Gazette of India, New Delhi, the August, 1950). The lists of Scheduled Castes have later on been modified by Parliament at different times, on the recommendation of the Backward Classes Commission, after the reorganisation of the States in 1956. Parliament has thus power to modify the list of the scheduled castes. In accordance with the spirit and provisions of the Constitution various State Governments, along with the Government of India, have passed laws and made administrative arrangements to remove the disabilities of those backward castes which are known as the Scheduled Castes and thus wanted to bring them to the main stream of the Indian life.

II

Students of Social Anthropology and Applied Anthropology working on the problems of the articulation of the Scheduled Castes with the other sections of the Indian community must recognize the differences in conditions of the scheduled castes in one part of India and in another. That is to say, we must recognize the fact that the term scheduled castes is an administrative label, which does not reveal the total story of the peculiar difficulties and disabilities, experienced by the backward and very low castes in different parts of the country. The author believes, and not without reason, that the scheduled castes in some parts of the country, for example, in West Bengal, do not suffer the same disabilities as are experienced by the Scheduled Castes in such other parts, Tamilnadu or Andhra. Secondly, the scheduled castes in the same state or region differ from one another in their sufferings due to disabilities. Thirdly, the present paper particularly wants to emphasize the point that different sections of the same scheduled castes differ from one another in their enjoyment of different opportunities. Any appraisal of the conditions of the scheduled castes and their problems must take into account these three dimensions.

III

There is no denying the fact that the conditions of the scheduled castes in West Bengal are a little better than those of the scheduled castes in many other parts of the country. In the reconstituted State of West Bengal, there are now 63 communities in the list of the scheduled castes. As per 1971 census the total population of the aforementioned 63 scheduled caste communities in West Bengal is 88,16,028, constituting 19.90 per cent of the total population of the state. Though there are 63 communities in the list of the scheduled castes of West Bengal, the following six communities jointly constitute about 3/4th of the total scheduled caste population of the state : Bauri, Bagdi, Chamar or Muchi, Namasudra, Poundra and Rajbanshi. From this sketchy account the point we have made above becomes clear : regional variation, differences in numerical strength, etc., characterize the scheduled castes and are responsible for many other differences between the one scheduled castes and another.

IV

It has been said earlier that the Scheduled Castes in West Bengal have to face disabilities less severe than those encountered by their counterparts in many other states. One reason pointed out here is the less rigid character of the caste system in West Bengal. True, the all India *Varna* frame of reference is hardly reflected in toto in the local caste hierarchy in any part of India. But the lack of fit between the four-tier varna-caste model and the local *jati* hierarchy is much more glaringly exposed in West Bengal than in many other regions of India. It is illustrated mainly in the division of the total Hindu population of the state into Brahmins and Sudras. Ritually, all non-Brahmins are sudras. Of course, there are different categories of sudras : the clearest division lying between the *Jalchal Sudras* from whom the Brahmins would take water and the *jai-achal Sudras* from whom the Brahmins would refuse to take water. Thus Kshatriyas and Vaishyas do not figure in the traditional caste hierarchy prevailing in West Bengal. What is more interesting, the trading

communities like the Pals, Sahas, Duttas (Gandhabaniks—dealers in various *Gandhadraya* like spices, etc.), Karmakars (Subarna-baniks—goldsmiths) occupy a low position in the caste hierarchy. In fact the *Suvarnabaniks* or goldsmiths belong to the *Jal-achal* group. One explanation of this incongruence between the all-India caste model and the local caste models is that this part of India was exposed to the Aryan influence at a very late stage in history. The aborigines and local derivatives have always been dominating here. The fertile land here has resulted into great dependence on agriculture and ancillary occupation rendering other economic pursuits, trade and commerce, less important and because the general militancy of the mass, a separate class of warriors did not develop. This is not to say that division of higher caste and lower caste does not exist or social and economic difference between the two are non-existent at all. Our contention is that the restrictions on the lower castes is less severe here than those existing in different other places of this country. Caste system is marked here by greater fluidity than in other parts. One interesting fact to note is that after the advent of the British Raj, while new opportunities for trade and commerce arose, the elites belonging to the higher castes availed themselves of those opportunities and the traditional trading communities did not make a great headway. However, these elites could hardly develop their independent trade and commerce complex: they were abjectly dependent on the British trade and commerce interest in India. The suggestions in this section are at best plausible and not certain. More historical and anthropological research is necessary in order to prove or disprove them.

V

We do not mean that the backward or low castes have not suffered any disability in social and economic field in the state. Though their suffering was not great in comparison to that of the low castes in other states, this suffering taken as such was really painful, their backwardness in social and economic field was real, their conditions were, in a word, deplorable. The Government of free India and the State Government have

taken cognizance of the lag they have been subjected to and are trying through various *measures to bridge the gap between* them and the other sections of the community. It has been proper not only from the point of view of the ideals enshrined in the *Constitution* but also from the angle of historical experiences. Many of the backward communities have tried, from time to time, to challenge the local hierarchy, to reorder it so that they could get a position in it higher than that was granted to them traditionally. Various political, social and religious movements of regional character have characterised the history of Bengal. Moreover, the struggle for Independence found a large army in these backward communities and their service in that field went a long way to upgrade their social status. Gandhiji's crusade against untouchability, his attempt at uplift of the Harijans should find a mention here. Yet there is a long way to go, much more remains to be done. And in completing the task that remains unfinished, many facts and factors have to be considered.

VI

Poverty is a great problem faced by the Scheduled Castes. If their economic disability is not removed, the Scheduled Castes will not be in a position to better their condition either socially or culturally. Different economic measures have been undertaken for the uplift of the economic condition of the Scheduled Caste. But, while we do not question the propriety of such measures, we may mention that poverty is the problem of the Indian population in general. Many Brahmans, countless people of many high castes are groaning under poverty in this land. If something effective is not done to remove poverty from the Indian society in general, the granting of special privilege to the backward castes alone would create ill feeling between them and the rest of the community that does not enjoy the new privileges.

There is uneven distribution of the Scheduled Castes in the State. There is difference in numerical strength of different Scheduled Castes, there are differences in education or enlightenment even in the same Scheduled Caste. Scheduled

castes that are nearer to the urban centre or seat of administrative power enjoy greater privileges than those living in remoter places.

It has been found that those scheduled castes that are numerically higher can, thanks to their weightage in the election system, exercise greater pressure on the powers than the numerically weaker Scheduled Castes. While the provisions for economic or educational advancement are there for the Scheduled Castes in general, they are enjoyed mostly by the numerically, politically and economically stronger Scheduled Castes when the weaker Scheduled Castes languish in age old backwardness and disabilities.

Finally, a division of elite and laity is clearly discernible amongst the different Scheduled Castes. The elite group both in the stronger and weaker Scheduled Castes is taking advantage of the new opportunities while the laity continue to suffer so many disabilities which have been accompanying them since time immemorial.

While attempts are being made to improve the condition of the backward sections of the people by the policy makers and administrators and while social scientists are helping them in analysing various problems, the problems raised above may be given some consideration, which, it is our conviction, will yield some fruitful results.

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*LIVING CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL
DISABILITIES OF THE SWEEPERS
AT TAMLUK IN MIDNAPORE
OF WEST BENGAL¹*

A study of the living conditions and the social disabilities of the sweepers (Scavengers : Metors) in an urban setting of Tamluk Municipality in the district of Midnapore, West Bengal, was made by the Department of Anthropology, Calcutta University. The study* shows the prevalence of untouchability and how they have adjusted themselves with the changing socio-economic situations in West Bengal after having migrated a century ago from their homeland, namely Huma, Ganjam and Berhampore of Orissa.

The sweepers and scavengers are considered as untouchable and engaged in filthy occupation and even today they have remained a segregated community in society. The sweepers of the Tamluk Municipality live in separate areas, one at Padambasan, in Ward No. 2 and Dakshin Chara-Sankar Ara, Ward No. 4, respectively. Though the quarters of the Ward No. 4 are comparatively well located, but the quarters of Padambasan are very unhealthy and dirty. These two colonies are inhabited by 43 families consisting of 206 individuals (97 males and 109 females).

TABLE 1
Population

Sl. No.	Ward	Number of families	Population		Total
			Male	Female	
1.	Padambasan Ward No. 2	30	63	73	136
2.	Dakshin Chara-Sankar Ara	13	34	36	70
	Ward No. 4	43	97	109	206
		(47.1%)	(52.4%)		

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* Field investigation & data collection by Shri K. Choudhury.

Both the quarters of the scavengers are surrounded on all sides by habitations mostly belonging to upper caste Hindus. In 1932 the Tamluk Municipal Authority constructed these quarters for the sweepers with financial assistance from the Government. These quarters are compact in nature and huddled together. The huts are made of mud walls and roofed with corrugated iron sheets. Besides, sweepers themselves built a number of mud and thatched huts at their own expense. The huts are not spacious and are so narrow and small that it is surprising that so many souls can be accommodated within each. Each tenement of one bed room ($10' \times 8'$) along with a verandah ($6' \times 3'$) and a kitchen ($8' \times 6'$). The ownership of the quarters vests in the Municipal Authority. The quarters are rent-free. The quarters are mostly in disrepair and are in a dangerous condition, with leaking roofs and broken floorings, though it was reported that the Municipality repairs the quarters when needed.

There is in all one tube-well meant for the whole colony, while these people use the tap water at present. Two ponds are allotted for their bathing, washing and other domestic uses. They also catch fish in these ponds. The water is awfully dirty and all neighbouring people wash their dirty clothes and take their cattle to bathe in these. There are only six latrines. As the number is negligible the people ease themselves around their dwellings. Children defecate wherever they like. On the whole, the colony is dirty and people live under the most unhygienic conditions. Garbage is thrown here and there; and the colony has become a breeding ground of flies and mosquitoes. Again, there is no provision of bathing; people go out in the open to wash themselves after calls of nature. This leads to a deterioration in the situation. There is no drainage system and during the rainy season the paths become muddy as a result of which the colony is turned into a quagmire. Arrangement for electricity is also lacking. In this way the sweeper's colony is segregated from the rest of the society.

The community predominantly makes its living by sweeping and scavenging. Labour force includes all the persons in the

Condition of the Sweepers in Midnapore 97

age-groups of 15—60 years. Persons belonging to non-labour forces (below 15 or above 60 years of age) who are not supposed to work, take part in other economic pursuits. The working force is the sum total of all the persons who are actually engaged in work.

TABLE 2
Working and non-working forces

Age-group	Non-labour Force		Labour Force		Working Force		Non-Workers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	M.	F.
1—14	43	52	—	—	—	—	43	52
15—60	—	—	48	51	39	38	9	13
above 60	6	6	—	—	4	3	2	3
Total	49	68	48	51	43	41	54	68

Out of total 206 persons of all ages living in the community 84 persons found to be workers and the remaining 122 of which there are 54 males and 68 females, are non-workers or dependants. It is interesting here that the number of non-workers exceeds the figure of working force. Therefore, in this *Methor community*, people start work from the age of 15 till their limbs do not sustain them or death overtakes them.

TABLE 3
Occupations

Sl. No.	Nature of occupation	Male	Female	Total
1	Municipal sweepers	25	35	60
2	Sweepers employed in the Government offices and hospitals	8	3	11
3	Sweepers employed in the non-Government or semi-Government organizations	5	3	8
4	Bus drivers	4	—	4
5	Officers (Clerk)	1	—	1
	TOTAL	43	41	84

None of them is in business or trade. One widow who lives by begging has been omitted in Table 3. Majority of sweepers are employed in the Municipality for scavenging and sweeping. It is seen that out of 41 female workers 35 of them are working under the Municipality.

The nature of job that has been imposed upon them by the municipality is to sweep roads, clean and wash the drains, scavenge the dirty things and lastly to carry nightsoil from the service-privies. Here is a definite division of labour among these sweepers. Male sweepers are responsible for road sweeping, scavenging, drain cleaning and washing whereas females are exclusively engaged for cleaning latrines and lavatories and also in carrying nightsoil from the service-privies.

In the Third Five-Year Plan the Ministry of Home Affairs took the scheme for the betterment of the working conditions. The scheme relates to the grant of financial assistance to local bodies for the purchase of modern implements and appliances to be given to the municipal and private scavengers for the rapid eradication of the practice of carrying nightsoil in head loads. The programme has already been implemented, the Municipality has supplied push-trolley having two buckets along with lids for carrying nightsoil. For road works they have been supplied wheel barrows, spades, scrapers, drain brushes, rattan baskets, scroom-brooms and a filth carrier (automobile) for transporting dirty sweeping from the filth depot to the dumping ground.

The Municipal sweepers and scavengers irrespective of sex get a monthly salary of Rs. 77.50 where as Jamadar, the conservancy supervisors (two) are given a salary of Rs. 89.50, along with a Puja bonus of Rs. 12.50 for all the sweepers and scavengers including the Jamadar. Apart from the pay scales, the other important point is security of service. The ordinary sweepers both male and female have not yet been made permanent as a result of which they are not entitled to the benefits of general provident fund, pension facilities and similar benefits. They are employed here on 'no work, no payment' basis, as a result, leave is granted in a very limited manner. They are not granted casual leave and other such benefits. They are given only a weekly rest of half day on Saturday and half day on Sunday. They have to work half day on all the National and other public holidays. The women employees get maternity leave once in every three years. The leave is three weeks pre-natal and three weeks post natal after which deduction in their salary is made.

There is no inherent difficulty in the measurement of income since they are fixed income earners. The marginal families are a little better-off and they are able to buy clothes and live one step above want. But the poverty-stricken families unable to make both ends meet, borrow large sums of money. One noticeable feature is their reticence with regard to their income. When questioned they did not like to divulge their precise financial status. However as most of them are employed in municipality, estimates of others who are engaged in other Government and non-Government organisations are given below :—

TABLE 4
Monthly income per household

Total No. of households	No. of workers	Monthly income of the household in the range of						
		Less than Rs. 25	Rs. 26-75	Rs. 76-125	Rs. 126-175	Rs. 176-225	Rs. 226-275	Rs. 275 above
43	84	1	3	12	13	7	3	4

The pay scales of the municipal sweepers have been presented before. The salary of the hospital sweepers is about Rs. 120 p. m. The drivers get Rs. 150 per month. The maximum number of families, i.e. 12 and 13 derive incomes in the income group of Rs. 76-125 and Rs. 126-175 respectively.

The expenditure pattern in the community also makes interesting reading. The major portion of expenditure is for meeting the day-to-day wants of the household. A fair share of the expenditure relates to food and clothing. In fact, clothing is a secondary affair in such a poverty stricken community, and they are satisfied with their bare necessity of clothing and with somewhat below the subsistence level of food requirements. Only a few families are in the subsistence level if not above all that. Even though from the statistical returns from their income patterns one could guess that they ought to be above the subsistence level in comparison with the accepted standard level of subsistence. But the basic cause for this low standard of these families is the heavy expenditure on alcoholic drinks and narcotics. Sometimes

they prefer a film show with a cup of tea or liquor to a dinner. Generally the household spends a meagre amount annually on festivals, marriages etc. However, no concrete figure has come out in the investigation for lack of time. One noticeable feature is that no household on an average spends more than Rs. 5 on education per month.

TABLE 5
Average expenditure pattern

Expenditure pattern	No. of household	Food (in rupees)	Clothing (in rupees)	Drinks . betel smoking (in rupees)	Fuel (in rupees)	educa tion (in rupees)	Luxuries (in rupees)
Income group							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Rs. 0—25	1*	25.00	—	—	—	—	—
Rs. 26—75	3	49.55	2.22	12.25	1.26	—	1.05
Rs. 76—125	12	72.82	2.76	13.30	1.57	—	2.98
Rs. 126—175	13	87.90	2.80	14.67	2.08	2.58	3.76
Rs. 176—225	7	144.57	3.57	14.59	1.79	3.25	6.53
Rs. 226—275	3	190.83	7.60	11.43	2.77	4.12	8.22
Rs. 276 above	4	195.95	8.12	12.52	3.10	4.90	9.27
TOTAL	43	106.02	3.72	13.66	1.97	2.11	4.64

It is well known that their poverty and ignorance have to a large extent made the people fall an easy prey to the money-lenders. It is apparent that the causes of indebtedness and deficit budgets are excessive expenditure on drinks, payments of principal and interest of loans, expenses in connexion with marriage and death ceremonies and other financial needs compel them to borrow money. The survey revealed that the main sources of loans are government co-operative institutions and money-lenders.

In order to save them from the grip of the usurious money-lenders the municipality have provided them with a co-operative bank, namely—the Tamluk Municipal Methor Joutha

* Begging and doles—source of income. No expenditure on their items except food.

Bank with the collaboration of Tamluk-Ghatal Central Co-operative Bank Limited from which they get loans since 1923 on easy terms and on nominal interest.

The maximum loans were taken from Municipal Methor Joutha Bank which account for about 75% of the total debts. The debts taken from the money-lenders account for about 25%. Municipality gave loan on their personal job security. Maximum quantity of loan given is Rs. 300 per employee. Only the municipal employees enjoy this facility. The duration of repayment of the loan is 24 months. The condition is one has to pay Rs. 10 per 100 rupees loan in a month. The loan is deducted from the monthly salary in instalments. The money-lenders charged interests at the rates varying between 50% and 100% per annum. The rate of interest charged by the Municipal Mehtor Joutha Bank is, one has to pay 3% per annum in 100 rupees loan per month.

TABLE 6
Indebtedness (income group-wise)

Income group (in rupees)	Total No. of house- holds	No. of households in debt	Percentage of Column (3) to Column (2)	Total amount of debt in rupees	Average indebtedness household in debt
1	2	3	4	5	6
0—25	1	—	—	—	—
26—75	3	—	—	—	—
76—125	12	7	58.33	630	90.00
126—175	13	7	53.85	1,340	191.42
176—225	7	1	1.14	60	60.00
226—275	3	2	66.66	500	250.00
276 above	4	3	75.00	1,100	367.66
TOTAL	43	20	46.51%	3,630	191.48

Table 6 depicts the distribution of the total debt by broad income groups. It shows that out of the 43 total households, 20 (45.51%) were in debt. The survey revealed that the average debt per household surveyed was Rs. 191.48. It also shows that the highest sum of Rs. 1,340 (36.91%) was incurred by the households having income of Rs 126-175. Other significant

debts incurred were by households having incomes in the range of Rs. 276-up ; Rs. 76-126 and Rs. 296-275 accounting for Rs. 1,100 (30·3%), Rs. 630 (17·35%) and Rs. 500 (13·78%) respectively, and the lowest debt is Rs. 60 (1·66%) in the income group of Rs. 176-225.

The sweepers and the scavengers are lowest among the castes and engaged as they are in an unclean occupation. Even today they have remained a despised community in the society. The dirty professions of sweeping and scavenging are undoubtedly one of the main causes for the practice of untouchability. After independence, in order to have an effective check on the practice of untouchability and its result and disabilities, Parliament enacted Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955, which came into force throughout the country on the 1st of June, 1955. This piece of legislation is a major step for ensuring to the Scheduled Castes their rightful place in the society. Untouchability stands abolished under Article 17 of the Constitution—"Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of "Untouchability" shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law"; it is still observed in some form or the other, more particularly in rural areas.

In order to get positive information about untouchability practised so far an opinion-survey was conducted, Table 7 depicts the details of opinion. Altogether 57 individuals of different caste groups were selected. They belong to various occupation groups in the locality and their opinion is given in the following table :

TABLE 7
Nature of untouchability practised

Castes	No. of persons who say untouchability is practised	forms in which untouchability is practised						Other forms	No reply
		Dining-sitting side by side	Seperate sitting in the house	Touching house-hold utensils	Entry into the Hindu temples	Taking part in the festivals of ceremonies			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Brahmin	6	6	4	6	6	5	—	—	
Kayastha	6	6	5	6	6	5	—	—	
Mahisya	16	13	10	13	13	9	—	—	
Baidya	3	—	2	3	3	2	—	—	
Benia	6	4	3	4	5	3	—	—	
Karmakar	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Other Scheduled Castes	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Methor (Sweeper)	20	20	18	20	17	14	—	—	
Total	57	52	42	52	50	38	—	1	

TABLE 8
Awareness of Untouchability (Offences) Act

Castes	No of persons interviewed	No. of persons aware of prohibition of untouchability under law	Practice of untouchability		No reply
			No. of persons who say untouchability is practised	No. of persons who say untouchability is not practised	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Brahmin	21	18	6	15	—
Kayastha	21	18	6	15	—
Mahisya	39	21	16	20	3
Baidya	3	3	3	—	—
Benia	15	3	6	7	2
Karmakar	9	3	—	8	1
Other Scheduled Castes	15	12	—	13	3
Methor (Sweeper)	27	5	—	7	—
Total	150	83 (55.55%)	57 (38.00%)	85 (56.66%)	8 (5.33%)

* Separate tube-well, separate *Hukka*, separate sitting in the bus and train, separate Post Office and Post Box, staying in the same hostels, entry into hospital).

Access to tea-stalls, hotels, restaurants and other shops etc. : they have the free access on the above places. Professional barbers, washermen do not refuse to serve them too. They are not served by the Brahmin priests but sometimes they have a low Brahmin priest exclusively for themselves. They are using any of the tube-wells or tap of the town though they have separate tubewells exclusively for themselves. Upper caste people also take water from this tubewell. But when they bathe in the pond of an upper caste Hindu there is a separate *ghat*, where they can wash their clothes or take their bath. There is no separate burial or cremation ground. Admission of the sweepers' children to the primary or secondary schools is not denied in any case. Other forms of untouchability like separate *hukka*, separate sitting in the bus or train, are not practised now-a-days, particularly in such a semi-urban or urban setting. Here the students and others are compelled to stay in the same hostel, hotel, boarding or in the restaurants. The untouchable persons get the same treatment from the Hospital as the Indian Constitution protects the Scheduled Caste and the minorities.

Table 8 shows that only 150 persons were interviewed out of whom 83 (56.33%) were aware of prohibition of untouchability under law. 57 (38.00%) replied that untouchability is practised' 85 (56.66%) said that it is not practised while the remaining 8 (5.38%) gave no reply. It is interesting to note that whereas according to the higher castes, viz. the Brahmin, the Kayastha, the Mahisya etc. untouchability is not practised in this town, the persons belonging to lower castes viz. the Karmakar, the Methor (Sweepers) and other Scheduled Castes are of the opposite view. And they substantiated their view by pointing to the forms in which untouchability is practised here. The survey revealed that untouchability is observed in an acute form in so far as the dining side by side and touching household utensils are concerned. The famous temple of Bargabhimā and a few other Hindu temples are open to all. There is no restriction on the entrance into the temples on ordinary days and also during certain festivals. But there is restriction on entrance into the personal temples. Moreover there is restric-

tion on taking part in the festivals and Hindu social ceremonies. They do not take their seat in the Hindu houses along with the caste Hindus. But in spite of the above practices, it is reported that untouchability has lost its age-old rigidity when mere contact with the persons of Scheduled Castes was supposed to result in pollution.

Introduction

India is a sub-continent having variegated ethnic groups with distinctive patterns and levels of economic life. Today there are communities in India who still cling to their abodes in in forests and crude technology and simple way of life while at the same time there are others with higher levels of economy following gradual adaptation to the nature and ecology and practising pastoral economy, slash and burn cultivation, or agriculture with plough and some others depending on simple industries having some sort of socio-economic symbiosis with their neighbouring communities. The physical background of this subcontinent offered in many cases resistance to easy interaction and practically this accentuated isolation in many cases. Yet migrations, trade and other acculturating influences in different historical periods along with cultural or religious conquests by different peoples from time to time combined to develop a background of unity amidst the cultural diversities. These created problems in the past. To them were added the problems which the British administration had cleverly woven in our country. They sucked all cream of this sub-continent and created a host of problems and degeneration. Yet, during British rule in India, nationalistic movement gradually started and began to spread its roots in different parts of the country at different levels. Thus the idea of nationalism grew and became intensified which ultimately compelled the foreign administrators to quit India giving the Indians independence. Naturally, India after independence, faced problems one after another and this led to formulation and implementation of

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various plans and projects not only for the country's physical development but also for the uplift of the conditions of group of people, who are considered to be the weaker sections of our country. These weaker sections constitute a population of 79,995,896 belonging to scheduled castes and 38,015,162 belonging to scheduled tribes out of total population 547,949,809 as per 1971 census. Amongst them we have the poorest of the poor, and the most backward amongst the backward people and they suffer from chronic poverty, economic insecurity and in many cases social injustice. For removal of such social imbalance and inequalities, they require help and aids for their normal progress just to become equals with their stronger brethren and thus to avoid social disintegration and disruption which may hold up the progress of the country as a whole. The problems of national integration and of poverty are the most acute ones.

In the Constitution, provisions have been made for their overall betterment and these weaker sections have been assured of better economy, social justice with adequate safeguards and harmonious integration with the society. Naturally various developmental projects were undertaken and schemes were drawn up to ameliorate—the wretched condition, as well as, to improve the existing socio-economic condition of the down trodden communities. As a social scientist, I would prefer to restrict myself to discussing the affairs of weaker section in general from my personal experience.

It is true that it has become the responsibility of our democratic welfare state to improve the condition of these people within a stipulated period. To explore the opportunity it is high time to ascertain to what extent the social scientists can contribute for successful implementation of those plans and programmes.

The question arises why it is so essential to take the active help of the social scientists to planning affairs for welfare measures. It is true that so far various plans and projects have been formulated and implemented for the welfare of the people there is no denying the fact that some of those plans foiled to

satisfy the need of the people to the desired extent. But it is regretted that in many of such cases proper evaluation was not done to ascertain the real causes of failures.

It, therefore, requires a probe of a different nature into the matter in which involvement of the social scientists is indispensable.

Need of Social Scientists

Today social scientists are not a few in India. Thanks to the Universities, courses of Anthropology, Sociology and Social History have been introduced and a large number of scholars have been turned out. They have studied the histories of mankind and societies and civilisations both in depth and in length and have observed many communities and people in situ in course of their study tours under the guidance of professors. Thus a group of social scientists with human laboratories throughout the country have grown and a vast literature of their researches is the achievement. It will be sheer folly if we disregard the social scientists and the fruits of their hard labour. Let us profit by them in our future planning and social reconstructions. For, it is they who can give us correct guidance in our march towards progress by indicating how to move, where to avoid pitfalls and bed-rocks that might undermine our progress. In the past man has erred many times, has suffered set-backs and has restructured their moves and plans to suit new circumstances. So the persons who have knowledge of these are the only fit persons who can guide us. Not one or two are enough. There are many such persons and the deliberations of this larger number after discussion will possibly help lead us to path of progress and prosperity. Hence we should insist that our country and planning need the good counsels of social scientists at every step.

It will be a mistake to think that social scientists are simply packed with loads of historical knowledge. They know the people better throughout the country, they stay with them, and attune themselves with the feelings and sentiments of the local

people—in a word, they speak for these people what is the best for them. So the social scientists' assertions are nothing but the mature words of the wise people of the communities. We should halt a while to listen to them patiently. For, they are, by training and experience, social anatomists who know where is the rub and pain in the society and how to remove them. They not only cure the ills of society ; they are also the social engineer. They know how to erect the society on solid foundations and with lasting materials. We are now all out for a revolution in society. How to do that ? A social scientist can advise how and where to lay the first corner stone of the new society. Thus, if we are to build a society on socialism—with ideals of "*bahu jana hitaya*"—a social scientist can suggest how to start and with what materials. If we take no heed of them, we would suffer wastage at every stage and our unplanned edifice would never grow. We would never be able to assess why we have failed or where we have failed. Nor would we be able to evaluate our planning for all its worth—either failure or success—without their expertise. Hence the need of social scientists has been felt now everywhere throughout the world. Here in India their assistance is all the more needed, for it is a *poor, developing and problem-ridden* country and the advice of social scientists will perhaps be the cheapest yet wisest of all.

Social Scientists—Their Roles

To have a scientific look at any aspect of life or progress of a particular area or a particular tribe or community vis-a-vis the larger scheme of development of the nation or country, we must not indulge in dissipation of enterprises or wastage of time, money or energy, but we should take firm steps based on experience and 'felt needs' of the people toward progress after we realise the failures of the past and follow the progressive moves that has earned the approval of times. Hence, the need for surveys and investigations carried out in a

scientific manner. Already throughout the country there are many papers and brochures containing reports of surveys and investigation and suggestion. Now, the time has come to bring out a compendium of all such surveys with comments on failures and successes. It is suggested that a band of research scholars should be asked to do so under the guidance of some social scientists. This is the preliminary step toward collection of plans for development.

Next, we may attempt stock-taking of experiments made so far during the last 73 years beginning with the twentieth century, which experiments have been made by voluntary organisations and Government agencies. We shall have then a proper evaluation of all such efforts and can thus have the benefits of experiences in a compendium.

It is true that social scientists are associated with many regional plans and projects. But it is a matter of great regret when it is found that in many cases their opinion are not duly considered in formulation and implementation of those plans and projects by the influential section of the members. As a result when such plans fail to achieve desired goal, the social scientists are discredited although they had no fault of their own. It is, therefore, desirable that the considered views of the social scientists on the pros and cons of the problem should be taken into account and all these should be recorded in appendices so that plans do not suffer from failures and social scientists along with others associated with the plan are not discredited. All plans and reports should take the pains to enunciate the 'felt needs' in order of priorities and to draw up plans accordingly so that the first and foremost need of an area is not lost sight of. Otherwise, we shall fail to make the scientific approach to the problem. It becomes, indeed, a matter of disgrace if a scientist—social, economic or agricultural associates himself with a plan which does not bear any logical local problem. In formulating the plan when we, the social scientists, would deliberate, we should assert that political or other extra-scientific considerations should not get the upper hand and upset the priorities and make any plan impracticable. In the mathematics of developmental plan, the first

step should be worked out first, then the next step and so on. Otherwise, problems will have no correct answer. I would insist on this process and this assertion I make from experience. In fact, the role of social scientists has been found to be the most helpful one in formulating development plans. They offer notes of caution against pitfalls and wastages and suggest constructive guidelines for advancement stage by stage.

The administrative officers who are actually taking leading part in implementing the schemes should adopt passionate view so as to sympathetically consider the opinions of the experts, particularly the social scientists, instead of sticking to the rigid view of their own. It is possible to reorient their views, if some refresher courses are taken by them. These courses would be offered by experts, social scientists and in these the basic concepts of development, plans and human sentiments and values would be stated with underlines by social scientists and experienced administrators with progressive ideas. The pattern of Administration in welfare states will have to be changed in accordance with the change of ideas which has taken long strides in the minds of the people. People today want immediately progressive conditions at par with developed countries of the world.

Without being too expensive and eloquent on the role of social scientists in formulation, implementation and evaluation of developmental plans and progress I would only suggest that social scientists may organise some sort of "Institute of Applied Anthropology or Social Science" to carry researches and adapt the results to particular areas in order to have the best results. They will be in a better position to understand the problems, to diagnose the ills or pathological conditions, to feel the nature of resistance to the developmental projects. Social scientists are, I feel, in a better position than the lay people to tackle the problem of the magnitude which exists in India. Though laws have been promulgated, the implementation of them has not yet brought about social equality. It is sure that transformation of habits and customs cannot be achieved simply and actively by government efforts. So social scientists

should go ahead to help the voluntary organisations or administration for the overall betterment of the country.

Facts To Substantiate

Here, I like to discuss some aspects of development of some communities belonging to weaker sections of India in general and to those of West Bengal in particular. We take up first the Lodhas, and the Kherias—the ex-criminal or denotified communities of West Bengal for which a few plans were executed at different parts of the States for rehabilitation purposes. As per plan supplied by the Government a sum of Rs. 1,500/- was allotted for each family. Provisions were made to construct huts, purchase land and bullocks and other agricultural appliances, seeds, poultry birds and goats. These denotified communities are accredited with criminal propensities; they are reluctant to take to agricultural life. They are most lethargic and are not patient enough to wait for a longer period to see the result. Naturally, what happened was almost the entire amount of the grant was spent to provide all items and nothing was left to purchase better cultivable land. Thus they were officially given all the items but in actuality it was of no avail. The colonies organised by Harijan Sevak Sangha (without social scientist) at Jhargram (Midnapore) are failure. But in other areas as they are organised by the Samaj Sevak Sangha and have been associated with the social scientists, the colonies are of different nature. Those who sponsored did not emphasise the governmental suggestions and purchased best type of cultivable land, supplied bullocks as per need of the land and not to each family and remodelled or mended the traditional huts only to divert the amount for the purchase of better type of land. So the beneficiaries in this colony got immediately better economic footing. Encouragement was given on horticulture and gardening to have cash money and employment throughout the year. This was supplemented by other cottage industries like mat-making, weaving, tailoring. The Lodhas became associated with new techniques of agriculture which assured better crop

and fetched money and brought more security. Gradually through follow-up schemes, slowly one after another, educational facilities were extended with some Ashram facilities to the boys and girls to make them associated with the norms of the society. Besides, there was provision for accommodating boys and girls of different tribes and castes who stood, not only as sentinels of the children of the ex-criminal tribe but were their custodians, and it gradually helped in minimising group distances and the spirit of isolation by way of integrating the children of the ex-criminal tribes with wider society. Thus the younger generation is realising the better way of life and this in return gives the older generation a new inspiration. The Lodhas are abandoning the anti-social activities. In other colonies these aspects are totally absent and as such these have ended in frustration. Of all such schemes executed during this plan period, the conditions of the colonies which did not seek the help of social scientists are more deplorable. One Kheria colony at Bansgarh (Binpur P.S. dist. Midnapore) was set up with 30 families and another was set up at Mukutmanipur in the district of Bankura with 30 Kheria families under the direct management of the state government. Besides, one colony at Bhupatinagar, with 16 families in the district of Purulia, was set up for the Birhors—a semi-nomadic tribe under the direct management of the government, colonies for landless agricultural tribal groups, mainly the Santals, were set up by the govt. at Chhotonagdonga Dumuria with 100 families in the district of Midnapore and another was started at Kusthalia with 37 Bauri families (S. caste) in the district of Bankura. The Kheria colony at Bansgarh is an utter failure—only 6 families are found to live there depending more on their own fate than on anything else. 15 Kheria families left Mukutmanipur out of 30. More than 10 Birhor families of Bhupatinagar left the colony selling bullocks, as well as corrugated iron sheets which were originally used for the roofing of their huts. The same is the case with Kusthalia colony. About 70 families left the site at Chhotonagdonga Dumuria—a few have come back very recently when the site became the command area of Kansabati Project. It is to be noted here that none of the Lodha families

rehabilitated by the voluntary organisations left the site, though they are handicapped with multifarious problems. This suggests immediately that government managed colonies have so far been proved abortive. Even the voluntary organisations which followed in verbatim the direction of the government faced many problems but others who followed the social scientist's directives have been more or less successful.

There are many instances regarding the failure of such endeavour elsewhere. In the 10th report of the Commissioner for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, India' it has been reported that in the district of Ludhiana, Panjab, 22 denotified families were rehabilitated on the worst type of land. Similar was the case in Uttar Pradesh. According to the Commissioner, "At many places, houses have been built, lands have been given, and yet persons belonging to these communities after settling there for a short time, have deserted the colonies". Again, "in Orissa a colony for them was established in 1957 in Koraput district with 24 families. It has been very recently found that only 9 persons have remained and rest have deserted the colony". Mr. Leuva told in his book on the Asur that "the Asur curse the administrators even though they get houses. The tribals feel disgusted at the government". Prof. Vidyarthi stated in course of study of the two rehabilitation colonies of the Malpaharia, "While the building was under preparation, search for Paharia families by local influential persons and administrative officers continued from village to village on the hills. This made the hilly people panicky. For them, it was a phase which led to the intensification of crisis and mental tensions as the fear for bringing them down spread out in an epidemic form".

I have been told by Prof. N. K. Bose that some Khond families were rehabilitated with government management in the hinterland of Orissa. They were given all facilities of rehabilitation like purchase of bullock and paddy as seed. But it was found that the Khond families consumed not only the paddy seeds but bullocks also. They said that out of need they ate paddy. Due to keeping of the bullock, the tigers and

leopard began to pounce upon the villagers—this gift of bullock become a problem in the forest area ; it was better to consume these for their safety.

In course of my field work at Paderu Taluk of Andhra Pradesh I found a rehabilitation colony (10 families) started by the government was deserted by three families as the beneficiaries were not given any land for cultivation or any other employment.

In West Bengal, in the district of Midnapore the writer was associated with a Project in which cottage industry facilities were given to the Dules—a caste of palanquin-bearers who used to sell the baskets, etc. manufactured by Doms—an untouchable caste. When arrangement of training by a Dom instructor was made, it proved a failure as the Dules did not want to work under Dom caste which was inferior to that of the Dules in social hierarchy. Thus caste tradition stands on the way of acceptance of innovation.

K. S. Mathur has pinpointed many problems of rehabilitation in Madhya Pradesh and described the reasons to be lack of understanding in the level of cultural configuration, lack of regional planning and lack in understanding of traditional culture. This view has been reiterated by Prof. L. K. Mahapatra when he discusses problems and welfare of Orissa tribes.

This clearly indicates that these plans were drafted and executed without the help of the social scientists. This means the scheme were defective *ab-initio in conception and nature*. Hence a very careful scrutiny of the causes of failure and actual needs is required for tangible and abiding results.

Hope For Future : How to Harness The Expertise of Social Scientists

A social scientist may have his own peculiar idiosyncracies. His views and suggestions should require to be sieved adequately and properly. It is therefore suggested that before the expert advice of a social scientist is accepted, there should be prior exchange of data, of views, of experiences. That should

be followed by seminar discussions and work-shop co-ordinations. And after the implementation of an item of plan there should be a follow-up of examination and evaluation by another group of expert social scientists. If such a method is followed I am sure the process will be a near-success planning. Then if any model scheme done on the suggested process above, become a success, the pattern could be quickly adopted elsewhere and multiplied, this would be the quicker possible contrivance in this country under the present circumstances. In this way a pattern of social scientists' services may be evolved throughout the country.

10. PROBLEMS OF DENOTIFIED TRIBES

A Case Study of The Interaction of Government And Diverse Ethnic Groups In Fringe Bengal,

Introduction

India is a land of diverse ethnic groups and socio-cultural systems. One finds here such an amazingly large variety of *racés as it sometimes appears exteremly difficult to discren the* string of unity binding all these vastly different groups together. Hence the cliché about India—"Unity amidst diversity."

The path to forging such unity has not been, at any time, smooth and free from troubles. Dissension and conflict, domination and revolt against exploitation marked the inter-ethnic relationship *all along, while at the same time, attempts* at harmony had been made by the affected groups.

One will find in India a great number of ecological systems existing in its various parts. And this difference in ecological systems has bred *different modes of life for different groups of* people. The physical advantages provided by Nature, the nature of economic activities, degree of contact with the neighbours or foreigners, etc., have placed some groups in a more advantageous position than the others. The latter naturally lag behind the former and this lag is *reflected in other spheres of their life.* These are the backward people of India—they constitute the weaker sections of the community. About 21% of the population in India are considered to be members of the weaker sections, both economically and culturally. Generally, they have been *dubbed either as Scheduled Tribes or as Scheduled Castes.* After the Independence of India, the Constitution has provided certain safegurads for these weaker sections to protect them against unequal competitions.

The Makers of our Constitution realised the importance of not only an open road, but of an equal start in case of these people.

Most of the denotified communities belong to this backward section. But their miseries and sufferings far outweigh those of other groups of the backward section. Their past history is one of sorrows and profound pathos. It provides the glaring example of how some times a society can become ruthless in constraining the behaviour of individuals and groups.

The term 'tribe' is understood differently by the academicians and the lay people. The members of a tribe generally retain some distinctive characteristics in the midst of other groups in the society. The denotified tribes were earlier known as "ex-criminal tribes." The interesting thing is that the so-called criminal tribe population constitutes a group or a section of a group within a tribe or caste, or an entire tribe or caste. Some of them would be found to be members of one particular Scheduled Caste or another. A few even claim descent from higher castes. At the same time, some sections of the Muslims too belong to the criminal tribe category. Thus one would find in the category of criminal tribes, groups of people who may be considered as tribes, Hindu castes and the Muslims. Thus, 'Criminal Tribe' has been a label, a straitjacket to mark a few groups as 'habitual,' rather 'natural' offenders. Criminality is considered to be a hereditary trait of them. Naturally, they have been kept segregated from the rest of the society. We know that criminality exists in all human societies in different forms, and in different degrees, be it literate, or illiterate, economically advanced or backward. But peculiarly enough, the so-called criminal tribes have been perpetually branded as criminals.

Social change is a continuous process. It is closely associated with changes in the eco-system. Sometimes changes in the eco-system place, all on a sudden, some particular groups at a disadvantage. They cannot cope with the changes that have been brought up on them abruptly and fail to march with those who had quickly responded to such changes. Naturally, they fail to follow the norms which the successful and dominant

groups adopt. They become, as a result, dubbed as deviant groups, and, at times, are considered by others to be criminals for such deviation. Therefore, it is not scientific and just to consider particular groups as perpetual criminals. But this sort of mistake had been continued in India all along in the past in respect of certain groups of people. The mistake was done by ordinary men as well as the administration. Being guided by such unscientific notions, the Government too took many harsh steps against these groups.

Background of the Criminal Tribes Act

The then British Administration in India, while encountering many problems in the shape of mass uprisings, rebellions and other disturbances as well as murder, dacoity etc., presumed that these activities were indulged in by different groups almost hereditarily. The attitude of the British Government has been unabashedly expressed in the following remark of Mr. T. V. Stephen, the then Member of Law and Order, made in course of introducing the Bill for suppression of criminal activities : "The special feature of India is the caste system. As trade goes by caste, a family of carpenters will be carpenters, a century or five centuries hence if they last so long. Keeping this in mind the meaning of 'professional criminal' is clear. It means that a tribe whose ancestors were criminals from times immemorial, who are themselves destined by the usages of caste to commit crimes, and whose descendants will be offenders against law until the whole tribe is exterminated or accounted for in the manner of the Thugs. When a man tells you that he is an offender against the law, he has been so from the beginning, and will be so to the end, reform is impossible, for it is his trade, his caste. I may almost say his religion is to commit crime".

Unfortunately this attitude was not exclusively of Mr. Stephen and the members of his race, it was also shared by many Indians.

Though Dr. Lombroso's widely accepted theory of "inborn criminality" continued to influence the Administrators for

years together, experiments in blood-grouping and anthropometric measurements held by Indian scientist proved that inborn criminality cannot be a fact, since the so-called criminal tribes and some higher caste people of Rajasthan showed the same racial affinity (Majumdar). My observation on the Lodhas, an ex-criminal group in West Bengal suggests that territorial and economic displacements along with failure of the members of the group in adjusting themselves with the fast changing situation forced them to the paths of crime and offence. However, the British Administration did not appreciate the fact. The Criminal Tribes Act was passed by the British Government as early as 1871 and applied arbitrarily and unjustly against some of the aboriginal tribes, castes and other groups like some sections of the Muslims in our country. Possibly to control some turbulent sections of our population having proclivity towards committing offences and crimes, the ruling Government enacted this law by which these sections were kept under strict surveillance. But there were periodic amendments. In 1876, the law was extended to many parts of the British India, specially to lower Bengal. An amendment of the Act in 1897 empowered the local government even to separate the children of these groups, aged between 4-18 years from their irreclaimable parents. This law empowered the Local Governments to declare any community or tribe or any part of a tribe, gang or class indulging in systematic commission of non-bailable offences as a criminal tribe. In 1911, further amendments were made, which provided for the maintenance of a Register of persons considered criminals for detailed information of their whereabouts. This amendment made it obligatory on the part of the members of the criminal tribes to give their finger-prints, and to report change of residence and also empowered the Provincial Governments to restrict movement of these communities within particular areas. The provision of this Act could, therefore, be conveniently applied to deal with the criminal tribes, and offenders were punished according to the nature of their crimes. By gradual modifications, this Act was, more or less, consolidated in 1924. An individual of any community which was considered to be

habitually criminal or which committed crimes in almost consistent manner came under the purview of the Criminal Tribes Act for constant surveillance. But later on, due to various reasons, modifications of this Act were made to alter the conditions of the criminal tribes and to uplift them. The chief reason was a change in the idea that somebody who was born of a criminal must be a criminal.

Repeal of the Act

Gradual change of the notions towards the criminal tribes resulted in various ways. In 1937, the Criminal Tribes Committee headed by V. N. Tiwari appointed by the Government of the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh) opined that "criminal tribes were a legacy of unhealthy social environments and the wrong methods pursued through many centuries in dealing with them. They are not the sinners, they have been sinned against." This committee not only recommended repeal of the Act, but also introduction of some welfare activities for this group.

The Madras Province (at present Tamil Nadu) repealed the Act in 1947 and Bombay (Maharashtra) in 1949. The Government of India appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of A. Ayyangar in 1949. "There has been persistent demand in the Central Legislature in recent years that the Criminal Tribes Act, 1924 should be repealed as its provisions which seek to classify particular classes of people as Criminal Tribes, are inconsistent with the dignity of free India", observed the Committee. The Committee after careful evaluation of the problems and making a comprehensive tour of the places where these groups of people lived recommended for repealing the Act. Henceforth, people belonging to these criminal groups were recognised as "Denotified Communities". By this, more than 153 communities throughout India were liberated from the crushing wheels of the law under which they had smarted helplessly for centuries. One very important fact should be noted here. A few communities in different States are still considered to be groups with criminal propensities, i.e., criminal tribes or ex-criminal tribes, whereas they are

considered as common castes in other States without any stigma of criminality. Thus even now the stigma of criminality is attached to a particular group in one State, and the same group is free from the stigma in another State. This is a problem which has caused mistaken identity. However, 2, 71, 02, 180 persons are accounted as members of denotified community, as per Census 1961.

Traditional occupations of these communities vary from forest economy to pastoral economy, weaving, mat-making, trading in beads and bangles, doing the job of scavenger, singer, and so forth. Many of them are reported to have followed in the past some unusual 'occupations' requiring special skill to eke out their existence. And these were considered offences or crimes according to law: e.g., burglary and dacoity (the Minas of the Punjab, the Lodhas of West Bengal, the Sansis of U. P., the Panjab, and Rajasthan etc.), swindling (the Jadna), cattle-lifting (the Gopals, the Manggrudis), cattle poisoning (the Manggrudis), pilfering and counterfeiting of coins (the Chapperbands), offences and crimes during the harvest (the Kaladis of Madras and Konda Dora of Andhra Pradesh), prostitution (woman of the Bedar Community of Maharashtra) so on and so forth.

After the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act (1953), our Welfare Government has decided to take some concrete steps in the form of welfare activities and rehabilitation schemes to ameliorate the living conditions of these groups and the incidence of crimes among them is dwindling, as a result, and idea that particular groups are hereditarily associated with particular kinds of offences is gradually losing ground.

Classification

If we look into the histories and ways of life of different denotified communities, we shall be able to appreciate more fully the fact that these communities cannot be and should never be considered as criminal tribes. On the basis of their habitats, occupations and ways of life, these denotified tribes may be classified into the following groups:—

- (i) Nomadic groups who have taken to criminal life.

- (ii) Fighting men and soldiers who, having lost their jobs, have turned into criminals
- (iii) Communities who used to work as village watchmen and Police, but have taken to criminal life
- (iv) Wild tribes in distress who took to criminal living as a way out of the plight they had fallen in
- (v) Beggars turned into criminals
- (vi) Some settled castes and tribes who took to criminality due to poverty

We may take a few examples from history. A good number of tribes of Chittor of Rajasthan left their homeland and took a wandering life when Alauddin Khilji (1296—1316) conquered their homeland. In course of their wandering, they indulged in criminal activities finding no other way to earn their livelihood. Then, there are a good number of communities who lost their traditional jobs and resorted to criminal activities under compulsion. The Banjaras of Andhra Pradesh are a concrete example of this type. They were peripatetic common carriers for generations. But due to the extension of transport facilities, they lost their jobs and became criminals. Ramoshis and Wagharis acted as guards near the hill ghats and forts during the Maratha regime. But after the loss of their jobs they adopted the life of criminals. The Lodhas, who lost their homes in jungles and could not adjust themselves with the changing situation, also resorted to criminal activities.

Approach of the Government of Free India towards the ex-Criminal Tribes

After the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act a good number of people were freed from the stigma of criminality imputed to them. The Backward Classes Commission appointed by the Government of India made many suggestions for ameliorations of the condition of these problem-ridden communities. They are summarized below :—

- (1) Criminal tribes should be called 'Denotified Communities' (Bimukta Jati, i.e., a group freed from the stigma unjustly imputed to them by others).

- (2) These communities should be included in the category of Scheduled Castes or Tribes and Backward Classes according to their distinctive social features.
- (3) They should be resettled in batches and gradually integrated with the bigger society.
- (4) Proper education for effecting national integration should be imparted to them, for making them free citizens of free India.
- (5) Reform activities should be undertaken for them.
- (6) Collective criminal activities and the individual criminal activities should be clearly distinguished and understood for dealing with them.
- (7) Proper type of education and employment for their children should be ensured.
- (8) Economic rehabilitation should be ensured simultaneously. We consider these recommendations as well thought out.

In pursuance of the policy of the Government, these different groups were restored to a status of dignity and self-respect, which had been denied to them for centuries. Restrictions regarding their movement and night surveillance on them had been withdrawn. They are no longer confined to their home environments. In compliance with the recommendations of the Commission, provisions were made by the Central Government and State Governments to rehabilitate these groups of people on sound economic footing. Steps have been taken to provide them with better housing facilities, along with cultivable land, and starting primary schools with Ashram or hostel facilities for their children. Small and Cottage type of industrial units have been started for their economic rehabilitation. It was decided that these groups should be given every possible opportunity for adopting honest and normal ways of living. Every effort is being made to wean them away from their supposedly criminal life. For the purpose of rehabilitation, in many cases, voluntary organisations have been entrusted with the charge. Government agencies themselves also undertook this work at many

places. But a detailed assessment of all these rehabilitation efforts has not yet been made. Naturally, a clear picture of the same is not available upto now. However, it must be mentioned that during all previous plan periods, provisions had been made for the rehabilitation of these down-trodden communities to raise their status and to make them equal with other citizens of India in all spheres. Thus the Government of India and a few individual organisations have tried to live up to the principles of the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation as enshrined in the Constitution of India. The efforts have raised different types of response and reaction in the minds of these groups who have remained neglected through millennia, in the minds of the neighbouring communities, and in the world of attitudes of Government officials and those engaged in these rehabilitation activities.

The Lodhas : A case study

The Lodhas of West Bengal are known as one of the ex-criminal tribes. A survey undertaken by the author revealed that out of the total number of active criminals in the district of Midnapur, the Lodhas constituted one-third. The Lodhas are commonly stigmatised with commission of dacoity, burglary, pilferage and theft. It has been ascertained that previously the Lodhas used to live in the forest and most of them were satisfied with the forest economy of hunting, collection of edible roots, tubers and minor forest produce, procurement of hides of snakes and lizards (Bengal Monitor) and selling these in the locality around. In exchange of these, they procured some indispensable commodities of daily life and hardly disturbed by others, they could make an easy living. During the early part of British Administration in Bengal, when forests and other Khas lands were permanently leased out to the Zamindars, then, for the first time, the Lodhas faced an intriguing situation, having been prevented from free access into the forest and its use for their different needs. On the other hand, other agricultural communities like the Santal, the Munda, the Bhumij and others gradually encroached upon the forests and, having cleared up these jungles, brought the

lands under cultivation, although any sort of entrance into such forests was declared a punishable offence by the Administrative Authorities. Thus by a trick of law they were dispossessed of their forest abodes and deprived of their hold and dependency on the forest. Still they sometimes collected their food and fuel from the forest in a clandestine way for their existence.

Thus economically displaced, the Lodhas could not adapt themselves to the changing situations immediately and some of them migrated to the eastern part of the district, which is less forested, in search of jobs of day-labourers and other employments for survival. The growing needs of the expanding families cramped in a small territory, could not be met with a hewer's income. Faced with this compelling situation, the Lodhas had to accept the challenge of survival and resorted to anti-social activities as a convenient means of livelihood.

"The economic and territorial displacement under a new setting, with the impact of scheming communities all around, affected very seriously their traditional patterns of economic life, and ultimately upset the equilibrium of the whole society. Probably under such circumstances, pilfering, petty theft, lifting of articles from the houses of the neighbours and clandestine sale of jungle produce were first resorted to individually, which, in course of time, developed into group habits. Amidst poverty, unsympathetic attitude of the neighbours and stoic apathy of the then ruling government, criminality cut a deep gorge into their society, in which the people had to roll down helplessly" (Bhowmick : 1963). But with the march of time, the Lodhas had to face other complex situations, such as :

- (i) Economic and territorial displacements, i.e., loss of livelihood which caused loss of self-confidence.
- (ii) Being not specialized in any profession, they could not fit themselves into the existing greater economic structure.
- (iii) Stigma of criminality lowered their social status and prestige in society.

- (iv) Subsequent police oppression, punishment and torture completely loosened their group cohesion and solidarity.
- (v) Arrest and confinement in jail completely shattered familial bondage and relations, fostering atomised or individualistic mentality.
- (vi) Poverty exposed them to exploitation and made them surrender to many undesirable situations.
- (vii) Being compelled to sell the stolen properties to other at a nominal price and thus being cheated, they came to think that the non-Lodha people were dishonest and tyrannical. This made them more suspicious and revengeful.
- (viii) Chronic poverty and a low aspiration level retarded the zeal and enthusiasm of these people, and developed constraints in their culture, making them lazy and lethargic. These made them unresponsive to any sort of change or innovation.
- (ix) Constant police torture, and torture by the neighbours made them migratory ; their homes being less attractive to them. Thus they began to lose the sense of belongingness.
- (x) These ultimately made them isolated and recoil into the shell of their old traditions. Also these enveloped them with coyness, timidity and left them full of fear and distrust.

Thus circumstanced, the Lodhas, not having rudimentary education, no skill in crafts or arts, no land in their possession, and no fixed employment as share-croppers or farm-labourers or work-house workers—were compelled to live far below the poverty-line, and indulge in spurts of anti-social activities whenever their hunger provoked them to go against the society and the law of the land. In the past, Police intruded to restrain their crimes but the democratic ideals and the philosophy of social justice have made rapid strides and the views of the State and its laws

have started changing in India, so much so that the welfare of the people has now become the ideal of the State.

Guided by the ideals of welfare, the Governments at the Centre and in the States have introduced a number of Schemes and Projects to improve the lot of the ex-criminal tribes throughout India. West Bengal has also a few Schemes for such purposes and the Lodhas, in many cases, have responded to these with enthusiasm.

Impact and Reaction

Altogether five rehabilitation centres for the Lodhas started working during the period of last two plan periods, distributed at five different places. These accommodated 200 families, i.e., 1000 souls, out of a total (approximate) population of 20,000. So its impact on the beneficiaries, as well as on the Lodhas in general, and on the other hand, on the neighbouring non-Lodha tribals and Caste Hindu group is of special significance. Assessment of the nature of economic and social benefits that accrued out of such schemes and other types of reactions, justifies the intrinsic worth of these schemes.

The Lodhas had to suffer chronic economic difficulties as well as social neglect for centuries. This had a repercussion on their minds and made them hostile to the so-called neighbours, who according to the Lodhas, are unsympathetic. It has been observed that their so-called civilized neighbours hate them for their suspected propensities. They are also afraid of the Lodhas, who may steal away their belongings. This sort of suspicion still continues among the groups concerned. These, in succession, contributed to the breakout of two serious types of tension in the form of riot and forcible decampment of the Lodhas from different villages. When attempts were being made to start rehabilitation centres in these places the Lodhas developed some imaginary ideas of receiving immediate benefit in the form of shelter and food as well as raising of their social status and wiping out of the long-cursed social negligence.

A sum of Rs. 1,500 which was initially granted to each Lodha family was not sufficient to bring about the benefit of a permanent nature. This made the beneficiary Lodhas more frustrated leading to displacement of their goals. This unconsciously impelled them to curse the sponsors. Besides, they are not agricultural-minded and their mentality is not such that they can wait patiently for the harvest. It has been observed that they prefer working as day-labour to cultivating their own land. They are ready to dispose of their own land to outsiders who sometimes advance them money or paddy. Maintaining of bullocks or cows or goats is expensive, time-taking and it requires keeping a constant watch on these animals. The Lodhas are not in the habit of keeping these animals. Even the poultry birds or the goats are consumed rather than domesticated.

To have gradual social cohesion with the bigger society and to achieve a prestigious status require refinement of manners and customs and mental preparation which cannot be done within a short period. So the expectations of the beneficiary Lodha have had a jolt from the reality.

With such a mental background, when they found that they had to work hard on the land which was given to them to ameliorate their distress and were constantly threatened with unemployment in the locality, they did not find any real solution out of such schemes. This made them less inclined to such premises of distant future and less pleased with the actual circumstances.

In a few cases, a good number of Lodhas asked for money from the social workers to meet the expenses of tobacco and rice-beer, refusal of which made them hostile and reactionary. Similarly, the social workers wanted to stop anti-social activities by exerting personal influence. It had some effects on the mind of these people. But it had a different reaction on the incorrigible criminals. It was criticised by them. These incorrigible criminals used to get their support from the so-called gentry, who were the receivers of the stolen properties. They were seemingly sympathetic to the Lodhas

and hostile to and critical of such schemes. For example, in course of our rehabilitation work at Bidisa in the village of Daharpur, Midnapur, we faced tremendous opposition from many villagers who sought to use the Lodhas for the purpose of personal benefit, which at times, included breaking of railway wagons, theft, dacoity etc., and who were prevented from doing so by us as well as the enlightened Lodhas.

The Lodhas of the adjoining villages became jealous to some extent because they were not getting any short of direct benefits out of such schemes. No provision has been made in the schemes for their active participation.

The neighbouring non-Lodha tribals as well as other people have a very serious type of mental reaction in regard to those schemes. They have apparently observed that huts have been built up for the Lodhas and land, bullocks agricultural appliances, goats and poultry birds—everything has been given to them, yet the Lodhas are not in a position to utilise these to their advantage. Land is left uncultivated, bullocks are sold out, goats are consumed and birds are eaten up. They are not in a position to assess the capability of the Lodhas and the nature of resources. They found that these are happening in a colony and think that these are the items of gift. The colourful description of such gifts and rumours of huge expenditure incurred for the purpose make them frenzied and illusioned. On the contrary, they see that in actuality the Lodhas are committing crimes as they did earlier and are pursuing anti-social activities as usual and are threatening in social tranquility, peace and order in the locality. The other non-Lodha anti-social elements who have clandestine relationship with the criminal Lodhas try their level best to the path of criminality propagating against the Government policies and voluntary organisation as well as the social workers who are in charge of the schemes.

Thus the Lodhas remain in isolation as they were, far away from the socio-economic and cultural boundaries of the locality but in touch with criticisms and adverse statements.

The Government Officers who frequently visit the centres, sometimes find the discontented Lodhas giving some false statements against the organisation or the workers, as this is very natural. It is quite natural that they cannot be satisfied with such limited money, time and social interaction. In this connection, it may be said that these criminal people are not so simple as the other tribal people are. But in many cases the Officers believe in their words without any questioning. This has resulted in more confusion and chaos. Sometimes the Officers who stayed for a short period gave them hope of a bright future which was beyond the control of the organisation or the Government. This made the Lodhas more discontented, which seriously affected the welfare work.

Conclusion

The problems of the Lodhas of West Bengal, in particular, and the denotified tribes of India, in general, have a few important lessons for applied anthropology and action anthropology. Throughout the world different groups of aboriginals are facing crisis because of changes in the broader ecological systems and socio-cultural systems. The question of integrating these groups with the wider community life now faces the people and administration in every country. To find an answer we must take into consideration the nature of the ways of life of these groups and psychological conditions. The way how these groups are interlaced with the particular ecological systems should be examined by us carefully. We would then, perhaps find the clue to the riddle why these groups fail to respond quickly and favourably to the 'facilities' of integrating themselves with the wider social life which may appear to us to be 'obviously advantageous' for them.

We should try to examine the impact of the efforts at changing their ways of life as made in the rehabilitation schemes and welfare activities for these groups. We shall then and then only be able to locate where the shoe pinches. Herein lies the role of the applied anthropologists. Being freed from the prejudice which affects the laymen and sometimes the

administrators, we should view the case from a scientific angle which should be, at the same time, humane.

One thing has been, we believe, clear from the preceeding discussion. The chronic social neglect of community by the society dwarfs its mind and abilities. It develops various angularities in it. And it becomes difficult on its part to overcome the inhibitions bred by such angularities. Ways should be found out to help it free itself from such inhibitions. We should note here a relationship between three segments of the society : the neglected communities or ethnic groups, the advanced ethnic groups and the State.

In welfare societies like ours and in advanced societies of today, the State is playing a positive role, which is becoming more and more important with the passage of time, to ameliorate the conditions of the down-trodden or neglected and backward ethnic groups, so that they can catch up with the more advanced ones. Otherwise the inequality in status and opportunity will continue to threaten social tranquility and vitiate the social atmosphere. For this reason, government must recognise the fact that they should not finish their task by giving the neglected communities alms. They should enable the backward communities to stand on their own feet.

At the same time, the Government should make an endeavour to bridge the mental gap between one ethnic group and another. But the task of promotion of inter-ethnic harmony can never be accomplished by the government alone. The wider society must be aware of the necessity of such harmony. The advanced ethnic groups must free themselves from the prejudices and angularities they have developed towards the backward communities.

For this reason a scientific outlook must be developed which would emerge from more intensive work of the applied anthropologists and action anthropologists in future. This necessitates greater co-ordination between the planners and the action anthropologists and the follow-up measures to assess the working of the programmes.

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11. *SHIFTING CULTIVATION: A PLEA FOR NEW STRATEGIES,*

The backward communities, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, have drawn the special attention of the Government of Free India. If we believe in India's national solidarity we are to subscribe to the view that all the different parts of it should move forward conjointly. In fact, if a part of the nation lags behind, it will be hanging like a deadweight from the rest of the country. Hence making suitable arrangements to enable the backward people to move along with others to integrate themselves with the mainstream of the national life is necessary. The economic development of these groups of people, therefore, is a must.

The present paper seeks to deal with the economic problem of the hill people centering around the shifting cultivation. According to many, shifting cultivation is the natural way of life of some tribal people—the natural source of earning their livelihood. According to others, shifting cultivation is detrimental to forest economy—therefore, to national economy—as it leads to wanton destruction of forest and the resultant erosion of soil, etc. One should consider the problem as a part of the broader socio-cultural milieu and an eco-technological system. In the first part of the paper a description of the way of life of the shifting cultivators and the ecological system they belong to, are, in brief, described. The second part deals with the arguments for and against the shifting cultivation. In the final part of the paper certain suggestions are offered by the author in relation to the problem. With the emphasis on Social Planning in India there has been a shifting emphasis on the shifting cultivation—a traditional technique of

1 Originally published in *SHIFTING CULTIVATION IN NORTH EAST INDIA*, 10 December 1976.

primitive farming adopted by different tribal communities in many parts of the Indian sub-continent.

Shifting cultivation is described as slash-and-burn or swidden in the English language whereas in India, the process of shifting cultivation is differently known in different tribal belts. In north-east India it is known as *Jhum* or *Jun* ; in Orissa as *Podu*, *Dabi*, *Koman* or *Bringa* ; in Bastar as *Deppa* ; *Kumari*, in Western Ghats, *Matra* in S. E. Rajasthan ; the Maria call it *Penda* ; *Bewar* or *Dahia* in Madhya Pradesh. The shifting cultivation is prevalent in other parts of the world, specially in Sumatra, Northern Burma, Borneo, New Guinea and in many parts of the African continent. The usual process demands the selection of a plot on or near the hill side or jungle. Then after winter, it is cleared off by felling of trees and lopping off the under growth which are left for drying. Shortly dry leaves and bushes are set on fire to turn these to ashes which are scattered over the ground. Very simple implements like dibble or digging sticks or hill hooks are used to make holes for the seeds. No animal is employed, there is no irrigational system, initial investment is very little. A little earth is covered over the holes and after rain seeds begin to sprout and when ripe is harvested. After raising the crops twice or thrice, the plot is shifted to another place due to loss of fertility of the soil ; the old one is left for years to recuperate. Period of recovery varies from place to place, with a range between four and twenty years. In conformity with the ecological condition and the technological knowledge of the people there are specific implements which are intimately associated with the *jhum* cultivation in the eastern and the north-eastern frontier of India. A list of implements mentioning the scope of their utilization in the process of cultivation may be noted as under :—

TABLE 1
Implements used

Name of implement	Primary use	Secondary use
1. Axe	For felling the big trees while jungle is cleared for cultivation	Occasionally it is used as an adze for giving concrete shape to the wooden handles of the implements associated with cultivation
2. Dao	(i) It is used for clearing jungles particularly the branches of the trees and undergrowth (ii) It is used for making holes for planting the seeds in the jhum field	(i) It is occasionally used for removing the unwanted weeds by cutting them off from their stems (ii) Sometimes it is used for preparing the handles of the agricultural implements
3. Hoe	It is used primarily for turning up the soil to make the field ready for cultivation	(i) It is sometimes used for clod-crushing with the blunt side which receives the handle. (ii) It is also used for levelling the ground, repairing the ridges and for removing unwanted weeds by scooping as well
4. Digging stick	It is specially used for holes on the ground for planting the seeds	(i) Sometimes it is used for clod-crushing purpose (ii) Occasionally the digging stick is used for destroying the unwanted weeds in the jhum field by beating them so as to remove the leafy portion from the stem
5. Clod crusher	It is used for crushing the clods in the field	
6. Rake	It is used for collecting together the leaves, small branches, unwanted weeds which are distributed scatteredly all over the field	
7. Winnowing fan	It is used for separating the food grains from the unwanted particles of the waste products	
8. Sieve	It is also used for the same purpose	

Bose noted that in different parts the process or technique of cultivation is the same and more or less uniform though rainfall and topography and the nature of crops vary. It has been estimated that about 26 lakhs of people practise shifting cultivation in various States and Union Territories of India like Nagaland, Arunachal, Manipur, Tripura, Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil-Nadu, Maharashtra, Mysore (Karnataka) and Kerala. According to the Report of the Commission for the Scheduled Tribes (1960-61) total area under such cultivation may be estimated to be 14 lakh acres (since land changed due to rotation hence total area estimated must be 5 times the actual area under cultivation at any particular time).

Crops vary from area to area. The hill tribes of Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura produce various agriculture products in their jhum field. They produce food grains, vegetables and also cash crops. Among the foodgrains coarse varieties of rice is the 'principal crop followed by maize, millet, job's tears etc. Cotton is another important product of the jhum field. Potatoes in certain places has been introduced recently. Among the vegetables, pumpkins, cucumbers, yams, arum are mainly cultivated. Besides these varieties, tobacco, chillies, ginger, indigo, etc. are also occasionally cultivated. By and large, these produces are sold in the market by which the people get cash money or other daily commodities though food crops are consumed by the people.

Other factors are also involved specially, some magico-religious activities in connection with many communities in selecting the sites. Joint endeavour or mutual aid in preparing the field, for harvesting is in vogue in many communities.

There are two divergent views regarding shifting cultivation : the first of which appears to be a narrower one, and the second, according to the author, seems to be a more liberal and humane.

Shifting cultivation, it is not denied, does some damage to the forest. It is, therefore, proved to be a perpetual bugbear to Forest Department. According to it, it is ruinous and wasteful.

It dries up the springs of the hills causes soil erosion, destroys valuable forest ; adversely affects rainfall and deprives the people of the benefits of the forest produce.

Mr. Nicholson, one time Conservator of Forests in Orissa, giving evidence before the partially Excluded Areas Enquiry Committee of Orissa, observed that "The *Damage* done to the forests by shifting cultivation *was serious and only under certain conditions* where the area of land available is large and population small *such cultivation does little harm*" (Emphasis added). Dr. M. L. Bor, Botanist of the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun remarked in his presidential address to the Botany Section of the Indian Science Congress, "of all practices initiated by men, the most anxious is that of shifting cultivation." Anyway, how far such a view is correct is a point for examination and in the subsequent part of this paper the view has been examined.

The other view, which is modern and more liberal, considers the practice as an organic response of the people engaged in it to certain specific ecological condition, rather to a particular eco-techno system. Here Shri M. D. Chaturvedi's opinion may be taken as a representative statement : "The notion widely held that shifting cultivation is responsible in the main for large-scale soil-erosion needs to be effectively dispelled. The correct approach... lies in accepting it not as a necessary evil, but reorganising it as way of life ; not condemning as an evil practice, but regarding it as an agricultural practice evolved as a reflex to the physiographical character of land." Those who subscribe to the opinion that shifting cultivation results into soil erosion will find it disquieting that shifting cultivation is a response of the tribal people of the hill areas to the problem of erosion of fertile top soil of steep slopes. As Mr. M.S. Shivaraman, Adviser to the Programme Administration of the Planning Commission, observed in 1957 : "It is a mistake to assume that shifting cultivation in itself is unscientific land use. Actually, it is a practical approach to certain inherent difficulties in preparing a proper seedbed in steep slopes where any disturbance of the surface by hoeing or ploughing will result in washing away of the fertile

top soil. The tribal people, therefore, take care not to plough or disturb the soil before sowing. The destruction of weeds and improvement of tilth necessary for a proper seed-bed are achieved with the help of fire..... In most of the interior areas, where communication is not developed and not sufficient land suitable for terracing is available, jhuming alone can be done for the present and as such every effort should be made to improve the fertility of the jhumed land."

Mr. S.H. Howard, another former Inspector General of Forests, recommended regulation, and not abolition, of shifting cultivation, "Which means that if a longer period of rest is given between the fellings, there is little danger of soil erosion." Almost a similar view was shared by Mr. J.P. Mills. The author likes to close this section with an emphasis on the practical aspect of the problem. The hard fact is that nearly 10 per cent of the tribal population (according to the Dhebar Commission) depends on jhuming, and they cannot be deprived of their land, their livelihood and their way of use on the basis of some theoretical opinion which is not shared by all the scholars alike. May be, shifting cultivation is not an ideal method. It is crude but it is interlaced with the way of life of people who possess a crude technology and a very little capital. At the same time the problem of soil erosion is there, the problem of improving the techniques of exploiting nature remains. Shifting cultivation cannot be wiped out with a stroke of pen by the legislators. It will take a lot of time to replace the system totally. In the meantime, the proper course is to regulate it, experiment with it, improve it, and, what is most important, try other alternatives.

One of the chief objections raised against shifting cultivation is that it leads to deforestation, as the hill people who engage in shifting cultivation indiscriminately destroy the trees, the forest. As trees are destroyed, erosion of soil takes place and it is only one of the hazards of deforestation. The author's humble question is: why shifting cultivation had been pursued by the hill people through the centuries, did not create any ecological imbalance? Or, do we face

the crisis of ecological imbalance caused by deforestation by contractors sanctioned by the Government? A lot of plain-speaking is needed. And what do we find in reality? While the hill people have to depend on shifting cultivation for sheer sustenance, for survival, and, therefore, cause some amount of deforestation, we, the gentlemen, raise a hue and cry: 'they' are destroying the forest. But when contractors destroy the forest for collecting timber for furnishing the quarters of gentlemen, for their multi-storied building, for providing the slippers for the railways used by them, we miss the fact that deforestation is caused by these contractors as well. Here the author insists on the Government's and the social scientists' making a survey or enquiry in order to examine how much of deforestation is caused by shifting cultivation and how much of it is done through the activities of the contractors enjoying licence from the Government.

A charge allied to the first one is that the tribal people who are engaged in shifting cultivation fell trees indiscriminately. This charge has not a very solid foundation. The author wonders how one misses the fact that tribal people have a very close link with the forest, and, they too are lovers of trees. In fact these people draw their sustenance not only from shifting cultivation but from different kinds of forest produce. Naturally, they, for their own interest, would not destroy trees indiscriminately: they would save those trees wherefrom they get fruits or other things which they can use for their own purpose. One may take the instance of the Samanths of Andhra Pradesh, for whom 'Podu' (shifting) cultivation is the major source of livelihood (Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute, 1972: Ch. IV). It is found that the Samanths also collect roots, tubers and herbs for their livelihood. They preserve and not destroy them. Secondly, the food also includes caryota palm products. These caryota palms "are found on the mountain slopes. The Samanths do not fell the trees on the hill slopes when they clear for 'Podu' cultivation" (Ibid., 48). The same applies to mango, and jack trees, the fruits of which are important constituents of the Samanths, and to tamarind trees produce of which has

both a dietary and commercial value for the Samanths. Then as the author has been informed, in Manipur, group of people engaged in shifting cultivation do not destroy but presume and grow with care those trees which have a commercial value. In fact, When they fell such trees, they do it for meeting the costs of running schools for their children and other welfare schemes.

Now, the author likes to draw the attention to one basic problem. *These tribal people engage in shifting cultivation for earning their livelihood. With a lot of labour they make an area cultivable. In fact, thanks to their peculiar efforts the slopy ridge is turn into terracing is done, it is found that non-tribal people occupy the terraced plots of land, and thus force tribals to have recourse to activities that may prove to be detrimental to the forest. Now, should those people, who are critical of the tribals, take some measures for stopping the ouster of the tribals from the ground which was prepared through their untiring toil ?*

Another problem of these people is that because of the absence of the adequate marketing facilities, these tribals do not get adequate price for the commodities they sell. If fact, they are forced by circumstances ; they sell whatever they have to sell to the 'middlemen' at throw away prices. Where would these people then go ? What steps have been thought of for putting a stop to his exploitation by the middlemen ? We have passed *Zemindary Abolition Acts*. Why don't pass laws for abolition of middlemen system in the sphere of tribal economy ?

Most of the times these tribals suffer because of lack of proper marketing facilities and communication facilities. They have to travel a long way for collecting some bare necessities of their life. And a portion of whatever little they earn is wasted on the way. The Government can take arrangement for making the necessities of life available to them, say through micro-growth centres or corporations for tribal development like the Girijan Corporation of Andhra.

Then, as it is evident from what has been said a little earlier the tribals like to preserve many trees. And arrangements may be made so that trees loved or liked by these tribals grow or

are grown in the areas where these people are allegedly found causing deforestation. These tribals may be introduced to the cash crops and attempts should be made to enable them to appreciate the value of these.

If one forcibly stops shifting cultivation it is commonsense that one should also think in terms of providing people dependent on it with alternative means of livelihood. Naturally, measures should be taken to see that these tribals groups are trained in other types of occupation. They should be given training in raising trees, protecting plant and trees etc. Cottage and small industries and indigenous handicrafts should be developed in tribal areas. One should see to the fact that the tribal people get job there and they are not exploited.

They should be given an education which is in tune with the eco-techno system they belong to. Their love for nature and forest should be reinforced through the education. It should be ensured that they can utilise the education and training they receive for enriching their life.

The thrust of the paper is laid on the fact that shifting cultivation should not be viewed simply as a part of life of the people in it. Then and then only the rational behind it and the nature of it can be understood. And once this understanding is there, the 'modern people,' the rational people can come out of the grove of their own prejudice. The shifting cultivators are not wanton annihilators of trees and forest. They have something with them which many of the plain people particularly intelligent and modern people of our country lack in. The story of co-operative movement is not one of success despite tremendous effort and huge expenditure incurred by the Government. But these tribals have an element of mutual effort and dependence among them. This co-operative feeling which is ingrained in them be fostered, if effort is made by the Government. It is no use blaming the shifting cultivators for deforestation. Provide them with some alternatives which must be in tune with their broader way of life, their social system, which is interlaced with the ecological system they belong to; they will not destroy the forest; wipe

out their hunger, poverty and exploitation and yet preserve their basic principle of mutual aid and corporate spirit.

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The Constitution of India directs, in Article 46, the state to take special interest in the promotion of educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the peoples, particularly the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. And through the quarter of a century the government of free India has taken many a step for uplift of the backward communities, particularly the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, both educationally and economically. But, some wrong is felt somewhere. Though the Government is trying his best, the result is not up to satisfaction. And, now educationists-planners and policy-makers and administrators have started reviewing the situation.

We shall look at the problem not only from the point of view of the students of anthropology and sociology but from the angle of those who themselves are engaged in the task of educationing some members of a few such backward sections of our society. It will be admitted by one and all that education has been hitherto understood in this country as formal education of which the learning of three R's constitutes the most important part. Gaining of theoretical knowledge marks the higher stages of this education. It cannot be denied that literacy as such has in many cases made the backward sections of the population more discerning and intelligent than before and helped themselves against the exploitation by the shrewd money lenders or usurers, has aroused in some of them an aspiration for a better living, a political awareness which may prove instrumental to the attainment of economic and social security at some point of time. While this much has been done, much more remains to be done. That more vigorous

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steps should be taken for the uplift of the backward communities is proved by the emphasis put upon the welfare of this section of our society in various welfare programmes. Along with this consider the appreciation of the inadequacy of the hitherto existing educational system, as evinced in recent talks about non-formal education, functional literacy and so on and so forth.

Naturally, the question comes to one's mind ; What is exactly meant by Education ?

An anthropologist or sociologist would consider education not merely as imparting of literacy or theoretical knowledge of certain things but also the broader process of induction into the learner's culture. Education in this sense would mean enculturation and socialization. If we forget this aspect so far as formal education of children of the middle classes—lower and higher and the rich, we cannot ignore it in the case of education of the backward communities. In their case we must be thinking of education especially in terms of *Sikhā-kāla-pātra* or place-time-object. That is the education of the youngsters of these communities must be viewed as linked up with the cultural pattern and way of life of specific communities on the one hand and the demands of changing times on the other.

We must bear in mind that those communities had their own way of understanding the life and educating the new members their life styles and trades. The last mentioned item needs special attention. Education for these communities meant not merely gaining knowledge but a means for learning some skill for earning livelihood. Time and again, the educationists, policy-makers and administrators have tended to forget this basic fact and, therefore, many of their plans and programmes have failed to yield the expected results.

Any educational policy for the backward communities must be based on a correct appreciation of the points above, must be founded on the 'felt needs' of the community for which it is designed. In fact such an educational policy must take into consideration the natural surrounding of the community, the

way of life of the community, its value structure and its economic needs. If these are overlooked, and if merely formal education traditionally followed in our school and college-curricula is imparted to the members of such communities, the result will not be a happy one because while it may benefit specific individuals, it will not deliver goods for the community as a whole for which the educational policy was originally framed. It would create a division within the community and the rest of, the majority of, the community on the other. Thus backwardness will linger, problems will get worsened.

At the same time social workers should consider the various snags that beset any change in the present education system. It is not possible for one single individual or institution to change the educational curricula. Nor it is possible for him to follow a different curriculum lest it may result in the non-acceptance of the product of the institution elsewhere. After all no individual or institution can grow or live in isolation. Then again there is the question of resources. Thanks to the conservatism of bureaucracy which is too well known to one and all, resources, however adequate or inadequate they may be, flow along the old channels. Naturally, any organisation making any humble attempt at following any realistic educational policy which will definitely differ from the traditional educational system has to work under those constraints.

One would ask what is to be done? We have tried to find an answer to the puzzle in the activities of the project at Bidisa in Midnapore, which originally aimed at rehabilitation of the Lodhas—a denotified tribe but later on assumed additional functions. It originated with the action oriented research on the Lodhs, one time known to be a criminal tribe, known for its criminal propensities which were earlier thought to be lying inherent in any Lodha child, crime was a heredity mark of the Lodhas. The myth of 'Lodha as born criminals' and their criminal activities were attributable to the loss of livelihood by the Lodhas due to changes in the socio-economic structure of the broader community. These changes definitely lay beyond their control. Moreover

their inability in learning any new skill for earning any livelihood and further due to conspiracy of the communities around them, manifested in the deliberate practice of labelling them as born criminals, in order to find a scape goat in them for various offences committed either directly by or with the abatement of these other communities, have worsened the situation. We did not stop here—our ideal was that of an applied anthropologist—i.e. harnessing the knowledge derived through anthropological research to the uplift of the communities who constituted the subject matter of research.

Herein lay the terms of what we are doing at Bidisa in Midnapore is doing today for the rehabilitation of the Lodhas and other communities through education—a type of education which is certainly different in many respect from the type followed in different educational institutions, a type of education which aims at making the boy and girl economically self-sufficient and which involves all the three parties to the educational process teachers-social workers, student and guardians. The Samaj Sevak Sangha the voluntary organization through which experiments are made first concentrated on persuading the Lodhas to accept what was being done for their improvement by it. That this phase of the history of the Sanghas's activities was marked by the hostility from the lodhas except some gainful and socially recognized means of livelihood, earn some skill which would be useful in the rural setting. The task of making the Lodhas away from a way of life which was socially condemned and was marked by indolence and apathy towards any good thing the life can give.

The task was accomplished in two important ways : (a) The adult Lodhas were sought to be resocialized (b) the Lodha children were caught up from the beginning for getting them socialized.

The second aspect was more emphasised with the assuming that (i) socialization would be an easier task to accomplish than re-socialization, (ii) Once the children are initiated into the new style of life, a set of new values, these would percolate through them to their guardians and the assumptions proved to be correct.

As has been noted above, it was not possible for the Sangha to break away from the traditional school curricula. In that case the school of the Sangha would have failed to get approval from both the educational authorities and the Government agencies providing financial assistance—however meagre it might be. So the Sangha had to follow the traditional curricula but the new thing the Sangha did was to supplement this type of education with another type—the type of education which would provide the learners some skill for earning livelihood along with the knowledge and information furnished by the traditional school curricula. The Sangha itself tried to work as a model for a self sufficient unit. What are other kinds of assistance it has received from the government and from other associations has failed far short of the actual requirement. So the Sangha has tried to replenish its funds through agriculture and production of different articles. The Sangha has utilized the labour of the ashramites and the teachers and social workers for the purposes of agriculture, for the working the carpentary unit, weaving and tailoring units, etc.

It has served three purposes (i) the inmates of the Ashram have been trained in particular productive activity or trade, which has helped them attaining economic self-sufficiency (ii) the guardians of the boys and girls of the Ashram have been associated with this process and they have learned new skills or new techniques (iii) the Sangha has attained some degree of economic independence and has thus served as model for self-generating rural economy in the area. The Sangha has been responsible not only for the education of the boys and girls but also of the inhabitants of the rural area where it is situated.

If one goes to the Sangha, one would note that the school hours for the boys and girls have been rearranged in such a way as they can combine their reading with learning other things and doing other kinds of work in a happy manner. The life of Ashramites is marked by disciplined activity throughout the day.

They offer prayers (community) in the morning, do the work of cleaning the yard and gardening, take tiffin, go to the school, read there and come back to the Ashram at 11 a. m. After break, they again go to the school. In the afternoon, they engage in different kinds of games and sports. In the evening they offer prayers. In this prayer meeting they do two other things : they discuss what they should do on the next day and redistribute the work load ; then they discuss the acts of omission and commission by the ashramites which act help them discern their follies and the ways to correct them. Then, they sit down to read. In addition to the tiffin, in the afternoon, they get meal at night on both of which occasions they behave in a disciplined manner, i.e. they have to attend the kitchen when the bell rings and move and sit in queues.

In addition to what they learn from their own works, girls of the Ashramites have opportunity to learn something new in the night school organised by the Sangha. Thus the Sangha involves both the children and their guardian in its activities. The Sangha was originally started with a view to refashioning the life style of the Lodhas, while it has not left its original goal, it has assumed new goals. Now in the Ashram one will find boys and girls of other tribal communities, different scheduled castes as well as high caste Hindu. Now the aim of the Sangha is to bridge the gap between the backward communities and mainstream of Indian society.

It therefore emphasizes the process of give-and-take between backward and advance sections of the community while it has given attention to the particular cultural styles of the different communities, it has tried to introduce them to the middle-class culture of our society, which is no doubt more sophisticated. Not that it has tried to spoil or destroy the cultural specificity of these communities. What it has done is to introduce the different sections of our society one another. Thus one will hear Lodha, Santal songs and find their dances in the Ashram and at the same time find the tribal boys and girls engaged in Rabindra-dance-drama. The Lodha boys and girls have staged Rabindra dance and drama as well as their own

folk dances and presented their songs in public places in cities like Calcutta and Delhi and earned appreciation of one and all. Of course, all the things the Sangha has done could not have been accomplished, if the workers and teachers of the Sangha and the schools associated with it were not dedicated to the ideal of the Sangha. In fact, the Sangha could succeed because it was a sphere of collaboration of the teachers, students and guardians.

The Sangha has succeeded in promoting an all-round development of the boys and girls (as well as their guardians) educated in the Aahram. It can claim in a definitive way that it has succeeded in showing to the world at large that a community socially stigmatized as born criminals can show its merit and ability in the ways of life that are socially approved, if it is given proper opportunities.

It has shown how education can be meaningfully integrated with the ecology and social setting, with the needs of life, how education can be utilized in making people disciplined and self dependent, how it can be used in elevating the aspiration level of the people who may otherwise remain indifferent and how it can be utilized in helping people find the ways to fulfil their aspiration and finally, how it can be utilized for effecting cultural and social integration. The organizers of the Ashram believe that education is one of the life processes and not merely a means of gaining knowledge from books.

The Supplementary method should be followed in educating the underprivileged communities. Existing institutions with their syllabus, examination system etc. be utilised. Economic needs and potentialities of the locality be scientifically studied. Surplus man-power, waste-land and under-utilised resources be properly utilised to help area development projects. Technicians, social workers, villagers, guardians, teachers and students should form a team. Life-centric education be imparted, with emphasis on modern methods of cultivation, piggery, duckery, poultry, weaving and the like. Side by side, students should be taught to love their own culture. Propagation and preservation of tribal language, folk-songs, riddles,

legends and myths etc. will develop in them the spirit of nationalism. This will help develop national integration. In the scheme of supplementary education, teachers have to play a vital role. They should act and behave like a social worker as well as a guide and philosopher. Drop-outs be diverted to formal education after developing their inner faculties in non-formal education. The government should not disturb the supplementary system. The system would save government money which would have been otherwise spent in different developmental schemes which are now being framed and implemented by the school. The school thus functions as an integrated part of the village development Agencies. We like to create a new world. But we do not like to have it destroying the old one right now. We like to evolve a new one by supplementary method in which the school becomes an Ashram. Evolution and growth will follow the natural course.

*WELFARE MEASURES AND BASIC
RESISTANCES TO THEIR
IMPLIMENTATION¹*

In India, there are about 500000 villages inhabited by various castes and communities, following different occupation. 82% of the total population live in these villages.

About 200 years of British Colonial rule, had disrupted the traditional ways of living of the people ; and lack of education and enterprise, had disintegrated their social and economic cohesion. Fortunately, however, India attained independence in 1947, but she had to face many a problem which have greatly affected the normal mode of life of the people. Attempts have been made during the post-independence period, through the various phases of developmental works, in the different Five Year Plans, to bring about economic progress and social stability, so that the people could achieve these gradually, whatever their present conditions may be.

This paper depicts some of the salient aspects of reactions between these forces and the different cultural traditions, attitudes, typical community status, and occupational guild of castes. The nature of the resistances offered to such changes, or absence of it, played a very vital role in the acceptance or assimilation of these new technological and social changes.

This paper is mainly based on field-work conducted by the writer at two places of the district of Midnapore in West Bengal. In one place, traditional caste occupations and statuses have been closely studied, and dealt with in the paper to show the magnitude of hindrances offered to the acceptance of innovations, while, in the other, various welfare measures adopted have been dealt with in the background of Block

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Development activities, and their impact on the traditional cultural patterns of the various caste groups and tribal peoples. Amdabad is a large village in Nandigram Police Station, situated in the eastern part of the district of Midnapore. It has a population of approximately 6,000 and an area of 9 sq. miles. This is a multi caste village, largely dominated by the Mahishyas. There are other caste Hindu groups, like the Brahmans, Kamitas (gold smiths), Kamars (black smiths), weavers, Teli (oil pressuers) and a number of Scheduled Caste communities like, the Paundras (Pods), Dules or palanquin bearers, locally called Behara or Mahara and other untouchables, like, Hadi, Muchi, etc.

This village can be reached only by an unmetalled road, on foot which is about 8 miles from the nearest metalled roads—one from Jhinukkhali or Bajkul, on Narghat-Kalinagar route, and other from Terapekhia Market, situated on the bank of the river Haldi, about 12 miles away.

This is mainly an agricultural village and most of the Mahishyas and the Paundras (Pods) pursue this occupation. The surplus agricultural products are sold in the nearby markets (this village has two markets of this type). Sometimes, these are exported to the markets of distant places and cash crops, like, jute, potatoes, etc. are sent elsewhere. This village has connections by river with 24 Paraganas and agricultural products are also exported there by boats.

The Brahmans, belonging to the Utkal Group, have their traditional occupation of worship and other priestly jobs, with the subsidiary jobs of cooking on ceremonial occasions. The goldsmiths and the blacksmiths deal in ornaments and conventional types of village implements respectively. The weavers pursue weaving though a few Mahishyas were found to have taken to this lucrative profession also, without losing their social status. The untouchables, like, the Muchis work in leather, and the Hadis follow the profession of playing on drums on ceremonial occasions, and sometimes resort begging in the locality to earn a living. Such is the case also with the Dules or the palanquin bearers. There are altogether 50 Dule

families, having a total population of 250, who are one of the communities under this survey. Their traditional profession is to carry palanquins on ceremonial occasions like marriage. When the bride goes to her husband's place or to her father's house the Dules are called to reach her there. In exceptional cases, rich people, specially zemindars, or the sick, or medical practitioners, or honoured guests or visitor also engage the Dules to carry them about in palanquins. Their remuneration depends on the nature of the occasion, as mentioned above, the distance to be covered, and the condition of the weather on that day.

Usually the Dules so engaged report to the client and take a sumptuous break fast before going on the trip. In addition, they take rice, vegetables or raw food articles, as *sidhā*, and thereafter proceed to their destination. Reaching the place, they take their meal, and receive payment fixed previously for the trip, and again take a *sidhā*. Sometimes, they also take used or worn-out clothes, and small tips and presents from the engager. In most of the cases, they do not have their own palanquins, for which, a charge varying from 25 Paisa to 50 Paisa has to be paid to the owner, when hiring palanquins. The women folk of this community with their children, usually live by begging in batches, either in their own locality or in the neighbouring villages. Sometimes, the male-folk are also engaged for carrying presents during the wedding ceremonies.

These are the traditional ways of living of the Dules of this village. They are also fed on festive occasions as beggars, popularly called, '*Daridra Narayana Seva*' and a small cash is given to the individuals, for their participation, which the giver of the feast believes is a meritorious act.

They are very loath to accept agricultural labour and the agricultural communities also rarely employ them in any agricultural operation except in emergencies.

During pre-independence days, they enjoyed better times, because they were frequently employed to carry palanquins. A few of them are also found to sell basket traps, and other articles of bamboo-work, like bowling vessels, winnowing fans,

water-proof coats made of palm leaves, strainers, deep rice-washing basins, etc. in the neighbouring villages. They themselves purchase the articles in other distant villages.

During 1956-57, the Indian Statistical Institute conducted a survey with the assistance of local people, to enquire into the economic condition of this area, and to explore the possibility of establishing a few village industries, the products of which, can be sold in the locality. The enquiry related to determination of the amount of investment or outlay, for establishment of a specific type of village industry, employment, time taken to finish a specific type of work, raw materials required, market price of the finished products etc. This was organised by small band of social workers, of which the writer was one.

The Dule community was selected, at that time, as they were facing very critical problems of earning and survival because the palanquins which were their main source of income, are now rarely used, and the gradually diminishing out turn of agricultural products have compelled the villagers not to offer rice to the Dules for their services. Occasionally they approached the writer to suggest ways for their economic development and to attain a better mode of living and to secure for them help from the Government or other benevolent institutions. The writer, as a first step, tried to engage them in the trade of basket making, in view of the following favourable factors :

1. Bamboos are used in basketry, specially for making winnowing fans, bowling vessels, basket traps for catching fishes, and other important articles of daily use ; and this material is available in plenty in this locality. Seasonal requirements of these specific types of articles, may encourage setting up of a permanent type of industry.
2. The above articles are generally prepared by the Doms, an untouchable community who do not live in this locality.
3. All the above articles are purchased from the markets of Kalaberia, 14 miles west and Birbanda, 9 miles south, and sold by hawkers belonging to Dule caste.

4. These hawkers also attend various markets of this locality and sell these articles, even in such distant places as Kakadwip or 24 Parganas by going there on boats.
5. If capital expenditure could be supplied to the Dules, on individual family basis, and all the finished product purchased from them paying only the cost of material, and labour charge, then it will be a profitable business, in which, these landless and poverty-stricken people can be engaged, to earn at least an honourable living.

The above proposals were made by the writer to the Dules, who responded enthusiastically. To train them up in this trade, an instructor, named Prasanna, who is Dom by caste, was engaged, and he was given accommodation in a school, situated in the heart of the Dule hamlet. It attracted not only the adult Dules and the women and children, but other castes like, Brahmans and Mahishyas too. The Dules also showed a great interest in learning the trade. Large orders for these articles were received, because these were being prepared from very good materials, and with utmost care and skill which attracted customers. The customers, in general, did not hesitate to pay a slightly higher price for these articles. The demand was high and the organisers marked considerable enthusiasm amongst these new artisans, and the people were also encouraged in this new enterprise.

During the harvesting season, however, this industry had a slight slack period. Dule women and children, who used to attend the training centre, left it temporarily, in the months of November-December, to beg from the growers, a morsel of their new crops. It was estimated that a woman could secure from 8 to 10 pounds of rice a day by begging, because every farmer had sufficient rice at that time, and was inclined to help the distressed. When the writer personally requested the Dule elders to curb this tendency of begging by their community members, they assured him that they would do so, and to send them again to the centre. But later, this was not done. Rather they kept away from the organisers.

A poster was printed immediately, and circulated widely, in

this region, requesting the villagers not to oblige the Dule beggars, with working ability, and without any deformity. by giving alms as there was a work centre for them in the locality. Besides this, traditional bamboo-work by the Dule women was encouraged by supplying them the requisite materials free of cost. In spite of this, neither the attendance nor the production improved during this period.

Then a detailed enquiry was made into this aspect of the problem, to determine the reasons why most of the Dules did not come to the centre to learn basket work which was more profitable, than other village industries in this area, and why they preferred to cling to their traditional ways of basket-making, which fetched very little profit, in comparison to the articles manufactured by the traditional Dom basket makers. Strangely enough the higher caste unemployed Brahmins or Mahishyas did not hesitate to learn this art. The resistance on the part of these economically backward and distressed Dules, therefore, called for a thorough probe.

It was revealed during the investigation that one Tarani-Behara had been made an outcaste by his fellow-villagers, as he had been acting as a basket hawker, which is the traditional occupation of the Doms, who are untouchables. Tarani Behara did not give up this profitable trade, in spite of the resistance of the villagers and social ostracism. His better economic condition and influence at that time saved him from the social ostracism. The Dules, in general, did not like to work under a Dom instructor, and to manufacture the articles, which are traditionally made by the Doms.

Later, on the eve of the last General Election, when workers of the various political parties wanted to purchase, in bulk quantities, small mats of wicker-work, for pasting posters, as these articles were not traditionally associated with Dom caste, the Dules agreed to work under a Brahmin or Mahishya instructors, to make and supply these articles.

It is apparent from the above, that higher castes are in a position to accept various occupation (Brahmin and Mahishya : Basket-work, and Mahishya : weaving), and can break off the.

caste barrier easily while the lower castes in general, hesitate to do so. This is due to lack of proper education and absence of an accommodating spirit, on their part.

This part of this paper deals with the welfare work, for betterment of the living conditions of the Lodhas, who are one of the Denotified communities of West Bengal. In the post-independence period, various welfare schemes had been drawn up and are being implemented in this area, by various organisations, patronised by the State and the Central Government. A centre to organise and implement such works was started in 1959-60, to rehabilitate 39 Lodha families of Daharpur, in Narayanganj Police Station. Arrangements were made to provide the Lodhas with requisite lands, to encourage them to take to agriculture. For this, some land was purchased and bullocks and seeds were given to the people. A plot of land was allotted to each head of family. It was found that most of the Lodhas were not interested in cultivation even though wages were proposed to be given to them, for the purpose, by the said organisation and in spite of the fact, that they were tilling their own land. On the contrary, they preferred to work as day labourers, in the fields of other castes, or for road construction, or in the rice mills. Traditionally, they are not agriculturists. So they did not like the hard labour involved in agricultural operations.

In the case of the Mundas, however, living in the same village, when they were given the same land, without other benefits, like wages, seeds and bullocks, they promptly came forward and proved to be efficient agriculturists. The Lodhas generally prefer to catch tortoise or fishes, and sell these in the locality, to earn their living. Collection of tortoise and fishing in the nearby paddy fields, have a close relation with their food gathering habit.

In respect of the concepts and treatment of diseases too, a survey was undertaken by the writer to determine whether they prefer to have help of the medical practitioners, or the traditional witch-doctors or sooth-sayers. It was found that a few had preference for both medical practitioners

and witch-doctors and a very few call qualified doctors for modern treatment though they are available in locality.

Such is the case with the Mundas too. They prefer to call the Deona, for treatment of diseases. It may be interesting to note here that during the field-work of the writer in a Munda village in Midnapur, a boy was found to be suffering for whooping cough. He was repeatedly advised to consult the doctor, living three miles away in a Hospital, but he discarded the advice and consulted the village Deona or sooth-sayer and witch-doctor for his treatment. It may be said here that not only the Lodhas, but most of the tribes, could not overcome or cast off their traditional beliefs, in the concepts of diseases and their treatment.

There is one Block Development Office at Belda for the entire Police Station of Narayangarh. It has been functioning for about 4 years. The Block Development Officer and his staff are quite energetic and popular. On an enquiry in respect of changes in the modes of agricultural operations it was ascertained from them that very few local people have been able to overthrow their traditional ways of agricultural operations. The following are the hindering factors :—

- (a) 80% of the total population has 20% of land of their own for agricultural purposes. So most of them are landless.
- (b) The general peasantry or landless agricultural labourers are employed by 20% of the land-holding families, they tactfully acquired these lands. The land-holding families do not like to invest money for better type of cultivation.
- (c) Previously, they generally engaged these landless agricultural labourers at the minimum wages. The expenditure incurred in this connection was very low, being approximately Rs. 100/- per acre.
- (d) They generally prefer broadcasting of seeds and this is conventional, although transplantation give

a better yield. But the latter process involves more expenditure. So less out turn is obtained.

- (e) They use locally-made ploughs, with typical Bengal type plough share, by which shallow furrows can only be dug, and by its conical working end, soil is turned out on two sides and some portions of land remained unturned or unfurrowed. This plough costs Rs. 20/-or a little more. The Blook Development Office offered to supply them a better type of plough, having its working end, at one side @ Rs. 11. 25 P. This cuts deep furrows and turns up the soil on one side. This does uniform furrowing. But this type of plough has not yet been accepted by the local people. They think that the traditional plough is more convenient for the bullocks as well as for the worker. Such is the case with regard to line sowing. This process has not yet been accepted by the people, except in one or two cases.

In the matter of application of bone meal as manure, the Scheduled caste and the tribals do not like this stuff. But the caste Hindu landholding communities prefer to use bone meal as manure, in agricultural operations and they often store these in heaps, in the verandahs of their cowsheds.

Thus, it is evident that in most of the cases, the higher caste communities are more prompt to shake off some of their ingrained prejudices, if they are convinced of securing thereby a better mode of life and assured prosperity, whereas, the lower caste people are still in a dilemma, and are not in a position to overthrow their traditional attitudes and sense of values, and to participate in the work for their own benefit, in certain particular types of development.

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14.

REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRIBAL COMMUNITIES,

Introduction

Tribal communities constitute 7% of India's total population as per 1971 Census. Called aboriginals or autochthones they are a very backward section of the Indian society, and the earliest types of civilizations are attributed to their ancestors. But due to various historical processes of stresses and strains over centuries, and due to advent and invasion of various more powerful ethnic groups from outside, they had to retreat for safety and shelter into the inhospitable hilly and forest regions of our country to eke out their existence somehow. In course of time, they developed a spirit of isolation and consequently narrow world view leading to strong 'in-group feeling'.

There are about 427 Scheduled Tribes in India with variegated socio-economic spectrum, beginning from 'food-gathering and hunting to fishing, slash and burn cultivation, pastoralism, settled plough cultivation, rudimentary cottage industries like, rope-making, smelting of iron, basket-making and weaving etc. in stages. Though the tribal communities are mainly concentrated in three important zones of the Indian sub-continent, yet due to various acculturation processes and demand of the changing situations, they are found almost everywhere now.

However, various attempts have been made in recent times by the anthropologists, social workers, researchers and administrators to assess the socio-economic and general living

conditions of these down-trodden communities and to note the nature of their problems. These have benefited these communities, to some extent, as on the basis of their assessments and recommendations certain Constitutional safeguards and privileges have been granted to them as weaker sections of the population of the country, so that by taking advantage of these privileges these backward communities might properly educate themselves and secure various gainful professions to bring themselves at par with other advanced sections of the society.

The backwardness of these groups of people is due to their prolonged isolation from the mainstream of the society, and exploitation by some advanced groups of the society. Besides, their impoverished tools and technology have pegged them to a perpetual backwardness. Being unable to exploit the natural resources to their advantage and to meet the various needs of life they have been compelled to remain in their forest abodes in continued isolation. Detested and disliked by the so called civilised groups of people they face various peculiar problems of life, even though apparently they live a problem-free life in the nature's abundance and bliss.

Prior to independence, some social workers and missionaries, individually or institutionally attempted to redeem these people from the hell of ignorance and enshrouding poverty and misery by implementing a number of social uplift programmes in small selected areas. As no proper field surveys were made, these efforts yielded very little results, excepting in the field of education and proselytisation which were the main aims of the missionaries. Recently, however, for the overall development of the tribal peoples many plans and projects have been undertaken by the Government. The latest of these are Sub-plans or smaller plans for the uplift of the tribal people within the State Plans. The main objectives of these Sub-plans are :

- (1) to narrow down the gap between the levels of development in the tribal and other areas, and
- (2) to improve the standard of life of the tribal communities by utilising the local, as well as national resources through integrated 'area approach'.

It is an 'area-based' planning with focus on the development of tribal communities.

However, all these development attempts during the preceding Plan Periods and the Constitutional Safeguards provides for them have made the tribal people more conscious of their drawbacks and needs. In their own interest they are now co-operating, although in varying degrees, in all these programmes to raise their condition of living. This has created a wide gap in the levels of their development, from place to place and there has been consequent discontentment. This irregular growth should be bridged up by more scientific and rational planning and diversion of resources on 'area need basis', as well as making larger mass contacts by various propaganda media for obtaining greater participation and uniform growth of development. This growth 'difference in development' is a major grievance of the tribals and they smell in it the spirit of deliberate neglect on the part of the authorities.

Tribal situation in Orissa

Out of 427 Scheduled Tribes of India, 62 live in Orissa of which 12 are considered to be major tribes.

Out of Orissa's total population 21,944,615 the tribal population is 5,071,937, i.e. they constitute 23.18 per cent. Out of 13 districts in Orissa, the tribal people are concentrated in Mayurbhanj (58.6%), Koraput (56.4%) Sundergarh (53.3%), Keonjhar (47.0%) and Phulbani (40.3%) districts. Many of the tribals live in hills and jungles. Thus they are a bit isolated. More than two-third of the Orissa State is covered with rocky lands and dense forests. Of these inaccessible and under-developed areas, 57,016.26 Sq. Km (i.e. 1/3rd of the total area of the State) have been declared as "Scheduled Areas" of which more than 50% of the population are Scheduled Tribes. Table 2 shows the particulars of Scheduled Areas as declared under the provisions of Fifth Schedule of the Constitution.

TABLE 1

Major Tribes and their distribution

Sl. No.	Name of the Major tribes	Population (1971)	Distribution
1.	Khondh	8,69,965	Koraput, Kalahandi, Phulbani, Gunjam Agency
2.	Gond	4,99,267	Sambalpur, Kalahandi, Koraput, Bolangir
3.	Santal	4,52,958	Mostly in Mayurbhanj, Balasore and Keonjhar
4.	Saora	3,42,757	Mostly in Ganjam Agency, Koraput but scattered throughout Orissa
5.	Kolha	3,09,586	Mostly in Keonjhar, Sundargarh and Mayurbhanj
6.	Munda	2,22,117	Mostly in Sundargarh, sporadically in Sambalpur, Kuchinda and Mayurbhanj
7.	Paroja	2,06,699	Koraput
8.	Bhuiyan	1,88,212	Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Pallahara (Dhenkanal)
9.	Kisan	1,80,025	Sundargarh and Sambalpur
10.	Oraon	1,64,619	Mostly in Sundargarh
11.	Koya	5,59,168	Koraput
12.	Gadaba	46,594	Koraput

TABLE 2

Scheduled Areas

(i)	Koraput district excluding Kashipur Tahsil
(ii)	Mayurbhanj district
(iii)	Sundargarh district
(iv)	Ganjam Agency (Gummar Nuagarh, R. Udaigiri, Mohana, Rayagada blocks, Sorada Taluk excluding Pandak holmutha
(v)	Khondmals and Balliguda subdivisions of Phulbani district excluding Chakapad Block

The tribes are at various levels of development in so far as their economic pursuits are concerned. They have to depend on natural vegetations supplemented by hunting, fishing and collection of minor forest produces for sale or exchange. Shifting cultivation is in vogue among some primitive people. This is known as 'Podu' and is practised by the tribes in some tracts of Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Kalahandi, Phulbani, Ganjam, Koraput, and Sundargarh districts. The crops and cereals grown by the tribal are mainly paddy, ragi, maize, *Kulthi*, black-gram, millet, mustard, etc. The State Forest Enquiry Committee (1959) estimate that 18000 Sq. Kilometres of the State were under 'Podu' cultivation and about 2 lakhs families are engaged in it. In 'Podu' cultivation a patch of forest on the hill-slope is cleared in January-March. This plot is allowed to dry up and the uprooted thickets and fallen dry leaves are burnt there. This is used as manure and scattered all over the field. Hoe is used as the implement for turning up the soil. Seeds, mostly grams are then put into small holes at short distances from one another and then covered by clay. With the first rains, seeds sprout and grow up. Later on between the months of September and December these are harvested. In the second year, the same procedure is followed, but the plot cultivated last year abandoned and a new plot of land is selected. After 10-12 years the same plot can again be used.

The process of shifting cultivation is wasteful and, as such, all the tribal communities contacted by the author are in favour of stopping 'Podu' cultivation and taking up the conventional plough cultivation if they get land. The State Forest Enquiry Committee also recommended that—

- (a) the 'Podu' tribals should be moved to settled agriculture and colonies where they should be given facilities of irrigation, agricultural implements, bullocks, etc ;
- (b) controlled 'Podu' cultivation on hill tops may be allowed ;
- (c) the deforested areas should be replanted with cashew, coffee, bamboos, etc.

It has been stated earlier that all the tribals are not in the same line of development. Besides, the developmental programmes meant for these people are not implemented or the funds are not utilised fully. Thus we find uneven growth and unequal development not only in Orissa, but all over the country. So, we find in these areas, the poorest of the poor, and more neglected among the neglected sections. It has also been argued that the main aim of all such provisions and welfare projects is to minimise the difference in the standard of living among the different communities and raise the levels of life and aspirations of the backward sections by which neglected people can elevate their standards appreciably and compete with their stronger neighbours in course of time.

As per statement of the Commissioner for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, India (1967-68), the following tribes are distributed not all over the districts, but in some Sub-divisions of the districts.

TABLE 3

Most backward tribes

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1. Banjari or Banjar (Koraput)
 2. Birhor (Sundargarh)
 3. Chenchu (Koraput)
 4. Dongria Kondh (Koraput)
 5. Gadaba (Koraput)
 6. Jharia Kondh (Koraput)
 7. Jatapu (Koraput)
 8. Juang (Keonjhar-Dhenkanal)
 9. Kondh (Koraput)
 10. Kutia Kondh (Koraput and Phulbani)
 11. Koya (Koraput)
 12. Lanjia Saura (Koraput)
 13. Arsi Saura (Koraput and Ganjam)
 14. Mankidi (Sundargarh)
 15. Mankirdia (Sundargarh)
 16. Parénga (Koraput)
 17. Bhuyan (Keonjhar-Sundargarh)
 18. Saora (Koraput)

Besides these, there is another group the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj who are considered to be ex-criminal tribe and are accredited with some anti-social activities. Their problems, therefore, seem to be different from those of other tribes.

Border and Inter-State tribes

It can be stated in this connection that a good number of tribal communities are distributed in other States also specially in the border-lying States. For example, in West Bengal and Orissa border or adjoining regions we find the Santals, Mundas, Oraons, Lodhas, Kharias, Birhors, Mahalis, Bhumijis, etc. In the same way some tribes like the Oraon, Munda, Santal, Kharia Birhor, Mahali are also distributed not only in Orissa, but also in Bihar too. There are a good number of tribes who live in Andhra Pradesh (Chenchu, Kondh, Gadabas, etc.) and Madhya Pradesh (Gond, Bhumia). These tribal groups have their distinctive cultural life as well as world view.

Their economic activities are conditioned as per ecological conditions and traditions. Naturally the style of life, technological developments, etc, of these tribal groups have attained variable stages. So they have distinctive identities. Their problems are also of different nature. Almost all the tribals have their own intrinsic problems and these create a lot of confusion for the administration to tackle them. This is due to lack of special field-studies and proper evaluation of the special problems of the different tribes.

For proper development and successful implementation of the Development Schemes the problems of the group concerned should be studied in details and given due emphasis. Ecology, environment and nature of dependency on the environment should be the guideline. Therefore, the nature of development should be planned after studying the aptitude as well as agro-climatic conditions. So that the communities involved can live a better and secured life and attain well prosperity by full utilisation of their regional resources.

Some problems

After 30 years of independence we are still thinking what to do for the tribals. Previously we used to blame the Colonial Administration for totally neglecting these people. But, even now, we find that most of the plans formulated by the Government are defective. In many cases the problems have multiplied and become obdurate for mishandling. Under such circumstances we have to first identify the problems then to launch a multiprolonged attack to solve them through integrated development programmes based on regional planning, as per 'felt needs' of the people.

The vital problems of the tribal communities all over the country, however, can be classified generally as follows :

- (a) **Economic** : in which they are not in a position to utilise the resources through their traditional/impoverished/poor technology. Naturally provisions should be made to improve their tools and technology, by which their economic life can be elevated to a higher and viable standard. As they have no money for investment in agricultural pursuits, they have to take loan at high interest from money-lenders. Thus they become easy victim of economic exploitation.
- (b) **Comparative isolation due to inaccessibility of their areas of habitation** should be overcome by creating roads and introducing other means of communication. Thus the people concerned will come into contact with the other advanced groups of people and through social intercourse, they will be in a position to be assimilated gradually with the mainstream of the society. Thus the wide differences or the cultural gaps so long continuing between the tribal people and other sections of the population will be minimised. A sense of integration may automatically develop.
- (c) **Co-operation** : For the involvement of all the tribals reorganisation of the existing village co-operative societies should be made admitting their representatives, and in all spheres of welfare activities there should be an Advisory Committee with experts and State/District/Block level Officers as government representatives, who should have also special training in this regard.

(d) The problem of education is more vital amongst the tribals. This may be given top-most priority to combat and remove their age-old prejudices and for reshaping the existing mode of their life. Literacy will prepare the community to appreciate and receive and enjoy the improvements that will be done, more easily. Moreover this will also help to socialise the different tribal groups by forging fellowship and cordiality with other advanced communities and will thus develop in them a spirit of integration. But the nature and pattern of education must be of different types than the conventional ones, so that these may fit with the local situations and meet their needs. Through education they will understand and realise the environment more rationally and scientifically. Thus they will be able to adjust themselves with the changed ideas and this will help them to articulate into the greater social system more intimately advantageously.

Conclusion

It follows, therefore, that the same principles and directives or blue-prints emanating from centralised planning should not be followed with rigidity, but should be amended according to local needs. Before this there should be a thorough survey of the region/area to sort out the specific problems of the group concerned. For an example, the Lodhas who are basically a non-agricultural community may not be benefitted from grants of land at the first phase of colonisation for they do not know proper use of land for cultivation purposes. Even it was seen that they had sold out housing materials like corrugated iron-sheets, doors and window frames, etc, to outsiders from the houses allotted to them for rehabilitation, for petty money and spent this for cheap enjoyments and other non-essential purposes. In most of the cases they have sold out the bullocks too at a nominal price, because it is difficult to maintain bullocks on their part, as they generally do not prefer agriculture.

In the same way for framing the Development Schemes the aspiration level of the group concerned should be carefully

assessed and needs are to be determined. In all cases the community concerned should also be consulted and their trusted persons should be requested to participate in such discussions and decisions. Thus leadership will gradually develop among them along with reorganisation of their community.

Rehabilitation and providing relief are two different approaches to tackle a specific problem. In rehabilitation, the individual or the community should be encouraged to stand on its own feet to realise the situation and to utilise the resources for its overall benefit. Relief is a purely temporary measure and related to the particular situations only. With this idea in view it should be determined as to how the locally available resources can be utilised with the existing man-power in a locality.

The tribal communities also need markets to sell their forest collections or produces as well as to procure commodities to meet their simple needs. So adequate price for the commodities they bring for sale should be provided to enable them to meet their needs. So a nucleus should be developed at the village level by opening a market centre or a co-operative there.

Approaches to generating diverse sources of income by utilising waste lands, surplus man-power and application of inputs in the form of better implements, technical know-how, good seeds, manure and fertilizer should be encouraged. Choices may be offered to practise horticulture, gardening orchard, etc. For gardening and cultivation a manure-pit should be dug behind each residential house in which refuse and animal excreta can be dumped. This process should be demonstrated to them. The author personally changed the contour of the village 'Bagavera' (now renamed Bidisa) in this way by making the Lodhas living there involved in this type of welfare work.

As subsidiary sources of income provision should be made of weaving and tailoring of common items of wear, so that both the males and females in their leisure time, when they generally gossip or sleep may make some additional income

by such work. Teaching of carpentry for repair of residential huts and making other items of use is another handy source for adding to their income. In this way the tribal people can get co-operation of the community at large through contacts, and will themselves be benefited at the same time. Thus integration will be more easy. A small Community Centre is necessary to accommodate all these industries.

All these activities will centre round a school or Welfare or adult education centre. There the teachers/social workers will jointly work with the students and encourage other villagers to join them. Thus the villagers, both male and female, will be gradually involved and voluntarily participate in such basic cottage type of industries.

These are two very common types of cottage industries which are conspicuously absent in almost all the Welfare Centres. The other defect of planning is that there is no provision for the means of earning money. Other conventional types of cottage industries hardly exist although these are the backbone of village economy. This is a queer attitude of planning and is affecting all Development Schemes. There is also no provision for follow up schemes. With this, more schools should be established in the tribal areas for imparting education, with hostels, community kitchens and arrangements for supplying midday meals by the LAMP. Thus we shall be able to make the village grow, individuals to be active and more participating in all matters concerning their community, as well as mould them for greater participation in inter-community affairs for social integration. Otherwise Utilisation Certificates will continue to be sent to the Authorities concerned by the Local Officers for the expenditure incurred in a project, without the people for whom the scheme has been initiated getting its benefit. This wastage of national resources should be stopped, if the benefit of the country is our real aim and intention.

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15. *THE SOCIAL SUB-SYSTEM OF A
FRONTIER REGION IN INDIA :
A MICRO-STUDY OF CONFLICTS AND
INTEGRATION OF DIVERSE ETHNIC GROUPS.*

Introduction

History of India dates back to prehistoric stage of civilization, as borne out by stone implements of different shapes and sizes, which have been unearthed in many parts of this sub-continent. These are attributed to the people who were, in many cases, considered as the ancestors of the present-day primitive people of our country. Thanks to geographical situation these groups developed their own cultures, sometimes remaining isolated, sometimes interacting with each other in course of their perpetuation and existence. In course of time, and due to normal historical processes of stress and strain, new cultural elements belong to new groups of people of smaller or larger societies of variegated cultures penetrated into the mainland and gradually got themselves incorporated into the mainland and into the matrix of the autochthonous basic cultural strata, and ultimately fused into new and complex social phenomenon. It is an accepted fact that invasion led to hostility, which required immediate compromise to avert tensional aspects of the conflict. These are more pronounced in a frontier tract than elsewhere. Thus there was an overall change in the general socio-economic contour of the country. While on the one hand it threw a few small localised communities of groups of a variety of cultures and languages to inhospitable refuge regions, it brought them on the other, into the

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greater fabric of social relationships, allowing them to be accommodated in the changing circumstances.

Thus, conflict, tension, composition and integration are the visible characteristics of Indian societies, accentuated by historical events. The variability, rather the nature of degrees of variability, differed from place to place and time to time. It is true that all the societies are more or less, dynamic. There are forces of continuity and change in all societies. So, in course of time, new societies appear in place of the old and not necessarily these changes should always be abrupt. Due to various degrees of interactions, sometimes conflicts among the groups force many social groups of different nature into large social units by gradually minimising many group differences. As a result, processes of adjustment buttress the existing social structures, institutions and the community life in general, with corresponding change in the sense values and philosophy. This directly creates a consensus of opinion to accept the change of the traditional or the conventional system, or of the cultural values of the older generation, and generates an incentive to acquire further innovation or change. It augments the power of gradual tolerance of puritan or orthodox thoughts or ideologies. Social and occupational mobility becomes pronounced in such cases, and people of lower statuses try to give up their older customs for the sake of new, which belong to a higher culture. New types of occupations are accepted by the group of people who so long clung to their traditional ways of life.

This pattern of reaction or adjustment processes of the people in a given society reflect a series of appreciable changes of appreciable traits conforming to some historical or political events, which can be designated as features of radicalism in a general sense. Sometime this becomes more pronounced in a frontier zone in our country, experiencing less Brahmanical penetration, or in the areas of a typical social contact-zone, where forces of de-Brahmanization have spread their roots far and wide. With this hypothesis and on the basis of facts as observed by me, I have tried to emphasise some aspects of

changes leading to automatic compromise in the interacting social groups of different sizes of Frontier Bengal, i.e. western frontier of West Bengal. Here in this micro-study, some of their cultural life and action patterns of the community life have been analysed to show these trends and their profound effect on the mind and philosophy of the people. Possibly these, in time context, have formed bendings and angularities on the social structure in general. These have been scanned and interpreted with historical correlations. As this observation is mainly centred round a given area of specified jurisdiction, it has very little scope for generalisation at present. But, I think a further study of similar strategic areas may reflect some common characters making it possible to generalise regarding the nature of characteristic changes.

Frontier Bengal represented in this limited study is the western frontier of West Bengal. It is the zone lying between the river Subarnarekha in the south and Rupanarayan in the north comprising almost the entire district of Midnapur and some portions of the adjoining districts like Bankura and Purulia districts of West Bengal.

In many respects, it happily corresponds with the term "frontier". Firstly, it is a geographical frontier—because one will see how the undulations of the Chotanagpur plateau, with its lateritic topography, natural growth of the jungles of Sal (*Shorea robusta*) and other trees, have come to merge with alluvial soil, duly formed out of natural denudation, and waves of the dancing day. This permitted the growth of vegetations of different types in accordance with its topography. Secondly, it is, rather it had been for a long time, considered as a political frontier, because it is the boundary of West Bengal, which boundaries of other States like, Bihar and Orissa merged. For a few centuries past, this portion was in the hands of many political ruling authorities. Sometimes, the Hindu kings of Orissa invaded this tract and occupied it, and sometimes it was done by others. Many times it was invaded by the Marathas and a portion of it was under their direct control even during the British rule. The Pathans enjoyed

its royalty and subsequently the Moghuls occupied this place. Then the Portuguese and the French also came in contact with this area through the river front, and ultimately here came the British headed by Job Charnock who defeated the Moghul army at Khejuri, a coastal region of this tract. Thus, this particular area had some strategic importance to be designated as a political frontier. Thirdly, the area is still now inhabited by many autochthones or primitive people represented by the Santhals, Mundas, Lodhas, Kherias, Mahalis and a number of other aboriginal derivatives like Mahato, Bagal, Ganju, Bhumij, who still cling to their pristine culture with little variation. Here other cultures like the cultures from the south, i.e. the Orissan culture (*Utkal Sanskriti*), and cultures from the north, i.e. Rarh culture (*Banga Sanskriti*), penetrated in stages, thus making it a place of cultural confluence or a cultural frontier. With this background, I would like to describe some historical facts, which may be correlated later with the social events, to show the nature of social changes punctuated by cultural transformations that have occurred.

The Background

This frontier region is a very interesting example of how the features of a particular ecological system are accompanied by a particular socio-cultural system. The eco-system here originally was characterised by unfertile land covered with thick jungles. The autochthones here were naturally dependent on paleo-technology. They were engaged in hunting, gathering etc. Later on, they came to do some agriculture but the nature of it was primitive. The unfertile nature of the land was responsible why people with advanced agricultural and other productive technique did not feel attracted towards this land. Naturally Brahmanical culture did not make here any headway.

Later on, with the gradually receding sea new tracts of land with rich alluvial soil emerged. And this change in the eco-

system bred some changes in the socio-cultural system of the region. The autochthones came down for doing agriculture. But they could not make much headway since their technology was thoroughly primitive. This land invited groups of people from the south and the east, who were agriculturally advanced and had already been exposed to a Brahmanical culture. So far as infiltration from the south was concerned, people from coastal regions of Orissa, Balassore, etc. came over here. And as to the inflow from the east, people came from the 24-Parganas who came here crossing the river Hooghly. Thus, the transformation in the broader ecosystem brought about a situation where the indigenous culture of the aborigines mainly inhabiting the western region stood face to face with the Brahmanical culture that so far had not penetrated here. A very complex stage in ethnic relations developed in this way.

When we look at history, we find that Brahmanism had never penetrated in this area. Rather, Anti-Brahmanical religious-cultural systems made some mark here. Jainism spread through this area.

Buddhism also spread here and from this area to other places. As the original inhabitants remained unaffected by Brahmanism the world here provided a fertile ground for Jainism and Buddhism. One would remember King Asoka came to embrace Buddhism only after his victory of Kalinga and Tamralipta, a sea port in Midnapur, the place from which Asoka's cultural emissaries were sent to different lands. Thus the area was a centre from which Buddhism radiated itself to other places.

Later on Jainism and Buddhism came to confront Brahmanism. I think that a fresh look into the history of this region will give us a new insight into the processes of cultural confrontation and assimilation that have been perennially going on in India since times immemorial. In later times Jaina and Buddha *Stupas* faced severe attacks from the Hindus, and, it is my strong belief, that the peculiar structure of the famous temples in the area, e.g. the temple of Bargabhimba, their location on a great height, may be explained by the fact that

these were built on the relics of *Stupas* of Buddhists. The remnants of *Stupas* (huge mounds of clay or stone, with a great height) made by Buddhists are still found here, though they are fast disappearing. At the same time, it is interesting to note, these two religious systems did not make any advance in the adjoining areas, i.e. plains inhabited by people having a strong base in Brahmanical culture. One thing is clear, i.e. the natural apathy of the people here to Brahmanical thoughts. In the core of the socio-cultural structure of the area, we find the Brahmanical culture and philosophy had very little rôle to play. It can also be said that in later times Vaishnavism of Sri Chaitanya, a liberal Hindu movement, in a way, a protest against the rigours of an orthodox Brahmanical system, swayed a major portion of the tract. In sum, the region had always remained a centre where different religio-cultural and socio-economic systems came to confront one another. The autochthones with their own cultural identity experienced the ravages of time manifested radical changes in the ecological system and convulsions in social structure.

If we look at the political history of the area, we find that Brahmans had never been powerful here. They were, as it will be seen below, less powerful than other groups. Brahmanical ideas had very little scope to reorient the life and philosophy of the people of this region; thanks to lack of supremacy of the Brahmans in the political structure.

If we consider the political development in the recent past of this area, it will be seen that in this strategic area, quite a number of rebellions or insurrections took place during the first phase of the British rule, and the people of this locality offered resolute resistance and fight against the British Raj as revealed in *Chuar* or *Paik* rebellion, *Layek* troubles, Santal insurrection, and the like.

Even in the beginning of this century, there were vigorous *Swadeshi* i.e. national movements of different nature, and the people, in general, took an active part in these, by boldly facing strong British oppression and the gallows. During the Thirties of the present century, three British

Collectors were murdered here successively, though it was not uncommon during the *Layek* disturbances. In the Non-co-operation and Non-violent movement, and in the movement for eradication of untouchability, violation of Salt Law, etc. the people of this area showed many radical characteristics and brought about effective changes in their social and political conditions. In this connection, it is strange to note that the people who revolted against the British in 1942 and subsequently established a Parallel Government here, cast majority of their votes against the Congress, the dominant political party in the first General Election after independence. Then again the Congress Government was voted out of power during the 1967 election and this region played an important role in bringing about the change; the United Front Government came to power. And curiously enough, during the U.F. regime extremist political movements developed here. Thus Debra and Gopiballavpur were among the few centres wherefrom Naxalite Movement developed. The nature of this extremist political movement has been highlighted in a paper of my friend Mr. R.K. Gupta. We may, however, note here that a continuous protest against the ruling power characterises the life here.

Caste and Community Structure

We have already told that autochthones account for a large portion of the inhabitants of this region. We have also told that Brahmans could not make a serious inroad in the cultural matrix of the area because they did not constitute the dominant group. Though the lack of fit between the Varna model of Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya, Sudra on the one hand and the local hierarchical system in a pan-Indian social phenomenon, it is much more glaring here than in any other region. The social structure here is characterised by constant occupational mobility which reveals the lack of strength of the caste system here (since caste system is always associated with fixity of occupations of different caste groups). Here one would find numerous caste-like or

near-caste groups which do not have counterparts in any other part of India, Bagals, Sahis (coachmen), Ganju, Chirmar, Sabar—Snake-Charmer so on and so forth. They are those autochthones who came in close contact with a caste-based Hindu culture and because of various reasons wanted to have a place in the caste hierarchy. Then, the lower castes never agreed to their lowly position and always tried to elevate their status in the social hierarchy. Through numerous conflicts and clashes, different low caste groups sought to change their identity in defiance of the low status ascribed to them by the higher caste groups, particularly the Brahmans. They tried to usurp the status of Kshatriyas, the caste or Varna next to the Brahmans through the exhibition of their prowess. The process is exemplified in the following table.

TABLE 1
Assertion of new social status

S. N.	Original low caste Position	High caste status claimed and assumed
1.	Paundra (Scheduled Caste)	Paundra Kshatriya
2.	Bagdi (Scheduled Caste)	Bagra Kshatriya
3.	Aguri	Ugra Kshatriya
4.	Kurmi/Kurmi Mahato/Mahato	Mahat Kshatriya
5.	Dom/Group engaged in making articles out of bamboo (Bansa)	Untouchable : Bansa Kshatriya
	Untouchable Bansa Kshatriya	

The last instance in the table is very important because here an untouchable group, i.e. a group occupying a very low status, whose touch even is considered defiling by the Brahmans and other high caste groups, is claiming the status of Kshatriyas.

That the Brahmans were not the dominant group enjoying the absolute control over landed property is clear from Table 2 on the caste identity of Zemindars (landlords) of the areas.

One fact should be noted here. All the Brahman groups did not enjoy equal rank. They did not constitute a homogeneous social category. Each group had its own clientele, its own privileges, its endogamy. The social intercourse of them was not all cordial, each trying to prove its superiority to others.

There was undercurrent of competition between one group and another. The case of Kshatriyas has already been explained and it may be added here that different Kshatriya groups vied with one another for supremacy.

TABLE 2
Caste identity of Zemindars

S. N.	Varna	Caste	No.
1.	Brahman	A — Utkal Brahman	4
		B — Brahma Bhatta	
		Brahman	2
		C — Sam Vediya Brahman	1
2.	Kshatriya		8
3.	Sudra	A — Utkal Karan	2
		B — Mahisya	7
		C — Daskin Rarhiya Kayastha	2
		D — Sadgop	2

Finally, different autochthonous groups remained with their own cultural identity and did not seek a place in the caste hierarchy unlike the buffer groups.

One particular pattern in the distribution of myriad ethnic groups is discernible. The western border is the stronghold of autochthones jealously guarding their cultural identity, the area lying immediately below is inhabited by the buffer or bridge, near-caste groups and the southern and eastern sectors interlaced with the sphere of Brahmanical dominance is populated by the caste groups.

Observation

I have studied the different aspects of socio-cultural life of the area, an examination of which would unfold to any social scientist a colourful drama of human events and demonstrate the nature of inter-ethnic relationships marked by conflict and co-operation, dissension and consensus, and continuous changes in the social system. I have depicted them in details in various works of mine. Space does not permit me to give all the details here. A few aspects of life in this region have,

therefore, been concentrated upon to exemplify the points made above. I have considered social movements in the first place. This brief discussion will show how the social structure here has although been in a state of flux, how there have been continuous attempts at redefining the positions of different groups in the social hierarchy, how the inhabitants of this region initiated many changes with far-reaching consequences not only for this regional social structure, but a much wider social structure of the country as a whole.

Changes in the social structure based on caste get clearly reflected in occupational mobility. It is really instructive to study the occupational mobility through several generations. I have studied the phenomenon in Occupational Mobility and Caste Structure in Bengal (1969). It shows that the incidence of occupational mobility has been very high in the area and how it is related to the fluidity of caste structure here.

We have, however, considered the complex of relationships that have developed round the temples. Temples do provide a meeting ground of various ethnic groups. Men to find a way out of the morass, which mundane life often times drives them into, take the help of supernatural powers and temples are the centres where they offer their prayer and worship. The temple complex will show clearly the non-Brahmanical substratum and will show how the Brahmanical culture has come to adjust itself with the demands of the originally non-Brahman groups. In the sacred domain even, Brahmans have been compelled, at times, to agree to yield a high position for a man of a low caste or a low social position. This point has been further elaborated upon in the "Functioning Secret Institutions", my presidential address at the Diamond Jubilee Session of the Indian Science Congress Association. The 'temple complex' shows it is very important to note, how autochthonous belief system, Brahmanical religious system and Muslim religious system, i.e. religious and belief systems of different ethnic groups come to interact with one another and how this 'complex' cushions the shocks generated by conflicts among them in mundane affairs. It would show how 'radicalism' earns an important concession from the Brahmanical.

system, through the recognition of priesthood of persons belonging to low castes and even to autochthones.

We have considered another feature of social life of the region. The forces of conflict and the rigours of Brahmanism have been toned down through a particular mechanism, i.e., the artificial relationship. Through this relationship persons belonging to different castes, high and low, autochthones, different religious communities come in close relationship with one another, they enter into ceremonial kinship obligations. Certain duties are enjoined on them, certain privileges are enjoyed by them—which duties and privileges tend to mitigate the harshness of a Brahmanical system and the antagonism that might otherwise exist among the different ethnic groups.

Next I have considered one particular aspect of life of the rural folk of the area. The constant conflicts among various groups as well as continuous efforts at resolving them, and finally the traits of a radical character ever protesting against the status-quo which reverberate in the proverbs and doggerels etc. i.e., in the rich treasure of folklores of the region.

A. Social Movements

Varnashram with its caste guilds and occupational patterns was very effective and strong for many centuries and it could have effectively interlocked the then prevailing different caste-economic structures. But gradual growth of population, subsequent invasions from outside, and new economic enterprises developing through overseas trade and commerce, as introduced by some foreign nations, who came to this land, and changes in political sphere, the problem of social change had taken different characters, at different times and places. Besides, spatial demarcation prolonged isolation and gradual assimilation of regional cultures had segmented the big communities into many sub-groups, manifesting some isolated cultural patterns of separate identity. Here only eight caste or community groups have been considered, of which six belong to Scheduled Caste groups, namely, (i) Paundras or the Paundra Kshatriyas who are considered as a land-holding and cultivating group, (ii) the Namasudras/cultivator, (iii)

Rajbanshi/fisherman, (iv) Hadi/sweeper, (v) Dom/scavenger and (vi) Muchi/leather-worker. Next is the (vii) Chitrakar or Patidar group, who are traditional painter and scroller. The rest are the (viii) Lodhas, a tribal group. A total of 18 villages in 9 Police Stations of the district of Midnapur were surveyed to note the social change. A few cases of different nature are presented here just to show the nature of the changes.

It should be noted here that facts cover a period beginning from 1900 A.D.

The Paundras were considered of a lower status, and so there was no question of their interdining with the local Brahmans, Karans or Mahishyas, who held a higher status. In a few cases, it was found that a few Mahishyas, out of love or affection, and as a protest against this so-called social injustice, took cooked rice from the hands of the Paundras. Later they were declared outcaste by the village elders. As a penal measure and atonement, they were directed to shave their heads and make a benevolent gift to a Brahman, after performing *Chāndrāyana* or the 'purificatory rite'. In many cases, there was imposition of fine too. In a few villages in the Police Station of Nandigram separate sitting accommodation was made on the basis of caste status, in *Jātrā* or open-air theatrical performances. At the same time, separate *Hookāh* or hubble-bubble arrangement was also made for each caste group.

After dinner, removal of the dining plates by the members of the lower caste groups were very common. In a village of Suta-hata Police Station of the same district, one Paundra started a temporary sweetmeat shop in a fair, but it was subsequently burnt by the so-called higher castes. Such was the nature of social injustice and disabilities prevalent in the local society.

In course of time, social workers belonging to the Mahishya caste sided with a few rich and wealthy Paundras, to protest against this and to organise a feast to remove untouchability. The dominant features of this feast were as follows :—

- (i) Paundra people would cook and prepare meals along with Brahmans or Mahishyas.

- (ii) There would be no caste restriction in distributing food to the guests.
- (iii) Invitees or the assembled guests should sit together in a row irrespective of their castes.

When this arrangement was made, it was given due publicity through meetings, posters and pamphlets. There were counter-meetings also, headed by one influential Brahman, Karans, Mahishyas and Kamilas or goldsmiths. But ultimately more than 15,000 guests were entertained in this feast in spite of counter propaganda.

In the same village, arrangement was made for propitiation of the wooden image of *Gauranga* (Lord Chaitanya) by the Paundras and to hold a great feast, which was so long denied to them. There was a little clash between them and the Brahmans, but at last the Brahmans had to yield. In this way, the Paundras gradually attempted their best to raise their social status.

The Namasudras of this area also, in many places, became Vaishnavas taking the surname "Das". They stopped widow remarriage and prevented their womenfolk from going to the market on any occasion, as the local castes did not practise widow remarriage and did not let their women go to market place and the Namasudras wanted to emulate them.

Rajbansis are fishermen by profession. A large number of them started the business of rearing spawns of fresh-water fishes and by this they earned a lot. They organised one association of their own, where many of their caste problems are discussed and solutions suggested. Many of them started clubs in their own villages too. In course of their movement, they attempted to revise their status by adopting new surnames in place of old ones by which they were usually known, e.g. 'Barman' for 'Bar', 'Bhowmick' for 'Bhunia' and so on.

The Hadi/sweepers of this district were generally engaged for carrying palanquins. They are well-organised and their panchayat organisation is very strong. Now-a-days they have raised protest against many social disabilities, which they were made to suffer. Previously they used to visit the house of a

well-to-do man uninvited during any festive occasion, and after taking meals, they were given a few paise as gift by the house-owner. This practice is known as 'Kangali Bhojan', i.e. 'feeding of the destitute', by which, it is said, the performer earns the blessings of God. Now, the Hadis demand formal invitation and do not remove their dining plates in communal feasts, which was earlier a common practice. A few Hadis are found to wear Sacred Threads now, in imitation of the Brahmans.

Muchi/leather-workers are numerically small in this area, but in a few villages it has been noticed that they, with the help of local Caste Hindu groups, are now getting the assistance of degraded Brahmans in their ceremonial affairs.

The Doms or drummers, sometimes practise bamboo-work and they claim themselves as 'Bans-Kshatriya', meaning 'Kshatriyas' doing bamboo-work. They also like the Hadi/sweeper, demand formal invitation on festive occasions performed by higher castes and in many villages they have organised the worship of *Saraswati* the Goddess of Learning with the help of a degraded Brahman priest.

Chitrakars or Patidars are traditional painters and scrollers. They are Muslim in religious faith, but stay along with the Hindus. A movement was started just after partition of India, to convert them fully into Hindu faith, and in this, the Bharat Sevashram Sangha of Calcutta, took the lead. For this, an arrangement was made to perform a 'Homa' (fire sacrifice) and a Brahman belonging to higher status was chosen as the priest. Women of this caste were given conchshell bangles and new red-bordered Sari or women's clothing on the occasion. Males were given wooden-bead necklaces. They were given new Hindu names too. But later, in one of the villages, when they felt that none of their Hindu neighbours stood by their side to help and solve their social problems on some personal grounds, they re-embraced Islamic faith by adopting Muslim names, e.g. Kshudiram Chitrakar converted into 'Kharshed' Jogen Chitrakar converted into 'Jaynuddin', etc. with the help of a Kazi—a Muslim religious head.

The Lodhas are a denotified tribe, but most of them assert themselves as 'Savaras' mentioned in the Epics. They are traditionally anti-Brahmanical. But to raise their social status, as they think, degraded Brahmins are requested to accept the priesthood of their communal rituals and celebrations.

B. Temple Complex

I have already mentioned that different castes and communities come together while trying to propitiate the supernatural forces. The differences existing between the Hindus and Muslims, between one caste and another, between the Hindus and autochthones get obliterated in numerous village worships and festivities. Here, however, I have tried to observe the process in case of four important temples in respect of worship patterns and the purposes, for which conventional worship was made. It has been attempted to determine the attitude of the devotees belonging to higher castes towards the priests belonging to lower castes or tribes. These temples are :—

- (a) Chandi temple of Bhetia in Kharagpur P.S. where the priest belongs to the Majhi or fisherman community—an aboriginal derivative.
- (b) Jaychandi temple of Pitaikanthi in Sankrail P.S. where the priest belongs to Lodha tribe, but due to the influence of the local Brahman Zemindar, one Utkal Brahman was also engaged as priest. After the abolition of Zemindary he has been deposed.
- (c) Brahmani temple of Narayangarh in Narayangarh P. S. where the Brahman priest belongs to the Madhyasreni Section. In all these temples, images of Mother Goddess are worshipped and these are very old temples.
- (d) Sarbamongala temple of Kesiari in Kasiari P. S. where a Brahman of Utkal Section.

Conventionally, temples and shrines are considered as seats of goddesses. At the sametime, these are dumb witnesses of countless of changes in human behaviour patterns too. This

study of temples was continued for six months, which revealed that altogether 47 castes and communities attended as devotees to offer worship to the deities. They comprised Caste Hindu, Scheduled Castes and even Muslims. Besides there were a few parties of devotees consisting of many castes like, (1) Political party, (2) (2) Football teams, (3) Opera or Jatra party, (4) Trustee Committee, and (5) Officials of the Settlement Camp. Total number of worships made were as follows:

TABLE 3

No. of worships

1.	Bhetia Chandi	...	130
2.	Jaychandi	...	834
3.	Sarvamangala	...	766
4.	Brahmani	...	139

Purposes of these temples may be noted below:

(1) Annual customary worship, (2) prayer and vow for cure of disease, (3) gratitude after recovery from illness, (4) ceremony performed on an auspicious day, (5) prayer for health, (6) general prosperity in trade, (7) prayer for employment, (8) promotion and stability in service, (9) security in jungle, (10) for abundant crops and good harvest, (11) after getting property, (12) for securing property, (13) for birth of a calf, (14) for cure of cattle disease and more milk, (15) after recovery of cattle from disease, (16) prayer for a child, (17) gratitude for birth of a child (18) for safe delivery, (19) for progress in education, (20) for success in examination, (21) for success in law suit, (22) gratitude after success in law suit, (23) for success in political election contest, (24) for victory in a football match, (25) for reputation in theatricals and opera, (26) for domestic peace and general welfare, (27) prayer for a good match in marriage, (28) observance of the first rice-eating ceremony connected with a body, (29) celebration for the first cooking of rice after harvest.



Now it is clear how different castes and communities seek supernatural help for an almost unending and fascinating variety of needs for which relationship with the supernatural is sought and maintained through these temples, and it is believed that these are fulfilled. In this connection it may be stated that most of the taxi drivers in Calcutta keep picture of Goddess Kali in front of them to avert accident or injury, which it is believed can be avoided by the grace of the goddess.

However, these variegated people of different castes and creeds in this specific physical environment of political or historical background, in their needs and problems, in their crisis and anxiety, always try to compromise with the supernaturals, from time to time, by attributing immense potentiality to them, and surrendering themselves to their mercy. These supernatural forces have been placed in the forefront of the godheads to whom man surrenders, and whom the man wants to please and satisfy. Sympathies are transposed, they are clothed, they are offered food, they are also given animal sacrifice and sought to be pleased.

That Brahmanical dominance was not an important factor in this region is borne by the fact that the two priests belonging to aboriginal groups and through them, a good many Brahmans offered their worships. The Brahmans have more or less, migrated into this tract later, and in small numbers, and have very numbers, and have very little political control over the ruling or prosperous communities living here. As a result, traditional Brahmanical cults have been transplanted and somewhat assimilated very slowly into the matrix of the regional autochthonous folk-cults which have been revealed in course of this study.

C. Village Life

Though religion divides the society vertically, yet there are features of compromise or tolerance amongst the

communities living there. In the economic field, this type of relationship is more frequent. Most of the Caste Hindu groups are found to employ tribals, Muslims and Christians as workers in their domestic, as well as, other activities. On many social occasions, Muslims are found to invite the neighbouring Hindus, especially at the time of marriage ceremony. The Hindus are found to participate in their wedding processions, taking uncooked meals, and offering presentations. There are ample examples of ceremonial or artificial relationship like, ceremonial father, *Dharam Baba* ceremonial mother, *Dharam Ma*, ceremonial brother relation or sister, *Dharam Bhai* or *Bon*, ceremonial friend, known as '*Dharam Sangat* or *Sai* or *Ful Sai*' etc. etc.

Incidence of such relationships of the so-called high castes like, Brahman or Kayastha, with some lower castes like, Hadi/sweeper or the Karanga and Kakmara/crow killer (nomadic tribe), or even with the Muslims is more or less frequent. In a few cases, it has been found, especially in regard to keeping of concubines, that inter-caste relationship is very frequent, though inter-caste marriage is not so frequent. This artificial relationship demands observance of certain formalities and offering mutual aid, and meeting social obligations with reciprocity, and I think, the group distances have been toned down to some extent by these. The Christians are found to prefer Bengali surnames in the present generation, but in cases of Muslims, this is not so frequent. The Christians are found to apply turmeric paste before wedding ceremony, just like the local Hindus. They are also found to mark their forehead and hair-parting with vermillion at the time of marriage ceremony. Paying subscription to Hindu worships or Muslim festivals, especially for Muharrum, is very common, and the Hindus are found to offer worship regularly to some Muslim spiritual potentialities. It has been mentioned early that in a good number of cases Muslims are found to offer worship to Hindu goddesses. A few cases are found at the Jaychandi temple of Pitalkanthi, where goat sacrifice was offered by the Muslim devotees.

In many celebrations, especially at the time of Gajan celebrations when the worship of Lord Siva is held on the days marking the end of a Bengali year, the Brahman priest is found at the top, performing some Brahmanical rites, but in the lowest rung, it is found that the devotees belong not only to the Scheduled Caste groups, but also to the Scheduled Tribe groups. This is an indication of the expression of the idea of tolerance.

In the village life too there are current amongst the people, a good many cap-verses or nursery rhymes which, in many cases, reflect some radical features, because these generally convey the changing ideas against the traditional social norms. Some undertone of violence is also marked as a form of protest against conventional social systems.

In one of the nursery rhymes, affairs of *Kachan* a tiny sweet girl, have been reflected. One Kanchan has no father. She has to stay with her uncle as guardian. She was given in marriage to an old groom by her uncle. So little Kanchan raises protest and casts mild curses on her uncle.

In another verse, a lady wants to behead her husband's elder brother, who appears to her as a jumbled personality and whom she does not respect at all. She wants to kill him in the manner a stag is beheaded, and in the last time she detects that her elder sister's husband is a Muslim.

The tenor of another rhyme is—"Listen sister, listen ! Ramdhanias is my husband. I won't wear vermilion mark on my forehead and hairparting, nor would I stay with him".

Another verse of different nature asserts :—

"The water of the river is always torrential and roaring,

Whereas the water of the tank is still and calm.

Would thou sister ! tell the truth and forswear the bad practice of levirate ?

(i.e. sexual relationship with husband's younger brother)
which is very unbecoming ?"

A further rhymes advises one to be active and industrious, as :— "Work, work hard and laboriously.

Some find fortune this way and get a few pieces of fish in their plate."

And those who do not, only get a potato."

Another demurs against social taboos :—

"I was mopping the floor, with cowdung paste—in the gathering twilight.

And to ! there lay in it, my husband's elder !

What a shame, I was off my guard !

Don't O ! Brother ! convey this fact to your wife."

This is against the conventional social taboos which are common in many societies. There are rhymes of political overtones.

In this way, in many songs and nursery rhymes etc. protests are made against the conventional social system, which so closely interlaced the groups together in their thickly woven fabric of traditions.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion we may deduce a few conclusions.

In India different ethnic groups with an infinite variety of cultural and social systems have lived through ages. At times and in places peoples with different values had come face-to-face. In the frontier tract under discussion the autochthones thus came to encounter the Brahmanical system. It perceived also a confrontation between Brahmanical system and other non-Brahmanical systems like Jainism and Buddhism which could find a virgin land in the minds of the peoples that had been least influenced by the Brahmanical system. Such cases of confrontation have been legion in Indian history. Changes in the eco-system have sometimes been directly responsible for such confrontation between the aborigines and other groups.

Historical evidences suggest that de-Brahmanical or anti-Brahmanical movements are not new in India. They became very strong, at times, through popular religious cults and movements. These prepared, in course of time, a field of their own and encouraged many castes and communities, led by some prominent personalities, to defy and cut through its

influence. Frontier regions provided a fertile ground for such movements. Besides, though we have not dealt with this point in the body of the text, we should mention that overseas trade, started in this country by some foreigners, gave opportunity to the people of the contact-zones to change their professions. This fact, by its own momentum, affected social tranquility of the traditional Indian life in a profound way. Thus, even when industrialisation or urbanisation did not make even a beginning here, Indian society—at least part of it—began to orient itself in de-Brahmanical way. This had been a fact of Indian life even in the hoary past.

On the one hand while the features of conflict have characterised the life of Indians, attempts at reconciling the differences between different ethnic groups and religious communities have been the other feature. Mechanisms through which inter-ethnic harmony has been effected or has been attempted are many and varied. Through the temple complex or the complex of artificial relationships different groups of people with diverse ethnic origins, value systems, beliefs and faiths have entered into a system of reciprocal services. While conflict of interests in mundane affairs have generated tension in inter-ethnic relations, it has been absorbed or mopped up by another aspect of group life—the aspect which is concerned with the supernatural forces. New relationships supplanting the divisive forces have come to interlace the groups with one another. Thus no external pressure or political power bred the unity. Rather even if these have tended to divide the groups from one another, a force from within has set them at bay and forged unity among the people.

The last important feature evinced by the discussion above is the emergence of a radical character in frontier region. As the social structure has remained always in a flux, as different groups have vied with one another for gaining supremacy in the social hierarchy, as they have tried to redefine their relative positions every time, a protest, a revolt, against the status quo has althrough characterised the life of the people here. The close and intimate link of the personality and social structure, or one may say, the relationship of character and social

structure, and the relationship of socio-cultural system and eco-system are very close and intimate indeed. The key to the understanding of complex social phenomena, of the social problems, lies in the understanding of how one system interacts with the other. As an anthropologist, as a student of applied anthropology, I have tried to explore the nature of this interaction in my endeavour and I invite my fellow-travellers to help me in my pursuit.

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*CULTURAL CONTINUITY IN SOCIAL
ECONOMIC CHANGE : A STUDY IN
RELIGIOUS COMPLEXES IN THE
RURBAN SETTING.*

Hinduism, as a major religious faith in India, has a wide variation in its concepts and rituals from region to region as is observed amongst the different castes and communities inhabiting this country. Though in the majority of the cases, the similarity in observance of the rituals is more pronounced, in others the divergence is equally palpable; thereby indicating that there is a cross-current flowing under its surface. The result has been a slow change in the beliefs and customs of the people according to the local traditions, geo-economic situation, and ethnic stock of a particular area. But this process of transmutation and assimilation can be well delineated by a critical analysis of the prevailing practices of religious rites and beliefs of the people of a certain area. And in assessing its scope, we find that 'Unity in diversity' is the dominating spirit of Hinduism.

Religion as a part of culture, has its inner or soul forces. In case of Hinduism there are a large number of smaller divisions, and it has no well-defined, large scale ecclesiastic organisation. Its two most general characteristics which form the soul of culture or inner culture, are the caste system and agreement about the sacredness of its most ancient scripture, the Vedas. The caste system is itself supposed to rest on the authority of the Vedas and, in a sense, the whole society forms an ecclesiastic-

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tical organisation. At the apex of the pyramidal caste system stands the Brahman class, whose members are the sole ministrants of the religious sacraments. Brahmanism became the property of Hinduism, which was applied and propagated both by the ruling Kings and the Brahmans. Politically, the monastic monotheistic and socially hierarchical tendencies of Hinduism accorded better with the growing power and divination of Kings. Casteism, economic status, regional beliefs and customs, influenced by the physical features of the area, historical sequences, and even the degree of individual conception and conviction about one's own religion, constitute the main features of this Brahmanism.

In course of time, these variations in the forms and practices of Hinduism have become institutionalised. Thus we observe how distinct are the variations in the ceremonial forms, the general patterns in the faith and the traditions, not only in areas separated by vast stretches of land from one another, but amongst different institutions in close proximity. Interaction of these institutionalised beliefs and customs of the people and the intra-relationship between them and the agents of the cult, i.e., the sacred specialists, the religious susceptibilities, ethical aspirations, modes of propitiation and confirmed faith in magical aspects of the professed religion, have contributed jointly towards the growth of a flexible Hinduism, standardised in small and compact areas, but extremely fluid and engrossing in others.

It is a fact that rituals are the most important aspects of every religion, beliefs being their secondary traits. As such, rituals performed by the sacred specialists naturally constitute the soul of culture of a religious complex. Absorption of different cults, practices and rituals from various parochial sources for centuries, within the structure of orthodox Hinduism, has invested it great flexibility and made it a pragmatic religion, for which it persists to survive even today. But the force of continuity largely depends on some other factors than the sacred specialists only, who are an organised group of persons. These are culture media, which include singing, dancing,

acting Sanskritic knowledge, technique of dramatic recitation, etc. through which continuity and a basic link between great tradition and little traditions are set up. Besides, the sacred centres and their locations are also very important in studying the forces of continuity of a religion.

The Setting

For the verification of our hypothesis, the Municipal town of Tamluk in the district of Midnapur, West Bengal, was selected. It is a growing and expanding town having 16 Municipal Wards (conservancy ward 5, non-conservancy ward 11) with a population of 22,578 according to 1971 Census. The town has a number of primary and secondary schools, college, post office, court, hospital, district library, clubs, political party offices, and some Government offices. It is also the sub-divisional headquarters. Due to its strategic position between Calcutta, Kharagpur and Haldia Port, Tamluk has its special geo-economic importance. Well-to-do persons of the rural agricultural areas have crowded at Tamluk, and this is clearly indicated by its quick population growth within a short time, as well as by other activities. These are the index of its growth—a growth through changes in economy, having corresponding changes in social contours as well.

Thus people of different castes and communities with different religions, beliefs and highly stratified social and economic status, living in this area, represent the urban complex—very typical of this locality. The adjoining villages are in constant contact with Tamluk town and depend on it for their various necessities of life, the villages are thus a part of this complex town, the town itself has a close link with the surrounding areas. Electric train facilities from Mecheda Railway Station (14 km) provide the people of this town a regular link and contact with Calcutta, the capital of West Bengal. Rural people visiting this town from distant villages for a variety of purposes, including worshipping the famous deity of Bargabhima, come in close contact with the elite groups of the town, leading to the development and stabilisation of heterogenetic ideas.

Thus primary urbanisation takes place almost entirely within the framework of a core culture that has developed here, and the local culture has become more urbanised and transformed into an indigenous civilisation. This has generated new ideas, utopias and counter-utopias. Thus, a sense of regional aspiration has developed, which has inspired some groups of people for further development, and this desire is spreading and affecting the villages, castes, sects and religions in the contiguous regions. Thus through the religious institutions, the greater ultra-traditions are infiltrating among the rural people and also into the town environment; and a complex urban complex is in the process of transformation. This interaction has brought about a change in various directions, e.g., change in material life, values, attitudes and world-view of the people concerned.

Attempts have been made in this paper to determine the degree of variations in the religious sphere and man's relationship with gods and goddesses (in a hypothetical sense), by surveying the different sacred centres of Tamluk. Details of the distribution of sacred centres, the nature of worships, and the daily and annual festivals, which are performed by the sacred specialists with the assistance of other castes, modes of propitiation along with purposes, objects of offering or sacrifices by different castes and community groups of devotees have also been recorded as correlated parts of this study. The organisation of the temple, like priesthood and its sphere of influence and the details of the owners of the temples who maintain these, have also been recorded. Even minor details like the distance of the temple from the home of a devotee and the time of his visit have been noted.

Historical Considerations

The present Tamluk town is situated on the eastern side of Midnapur district, on the western bank of the river Rupnarayana between 22°17'50" north latitude and 78°57'30" east longitude. It takes approximately two hours to reach Tamluk from Howrah Station through Mecheda Railway station. There is a network

of metallad roads linking almost all important places of the district. Boats, bullock-carts and rickshaws are the popular means of communication. The Rupnarayana bridge has denuded the boatmen community, in general, of their means of livelihood. The name Tamluk has been referred to in many ancient texts of Hindu literatures, such as, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Sanghita, the Puran, etc. as Tamralipta, Tamarlipti, Tamoliplung, Tamolipi, Tamalini, etc. But actual history of this ancient town can only be traced upto the later Hindu period, when King Chandragupta-Vikramaditya ruled this country. At the early dawn of history, Tamluk was a great sea-port, while the country around it was the stronghold of the 'Kaibartas'—a fishing and boating community mentioned in the Pillar Edict V of Asok, as 'Kevata'. On the basis of its archaeological finds, this town can be dated back to the Neolithic civilisation. Recent archaeological excavations, in and around Tamluk, have yielded many stone celts, terracotta figurines, copper coins, highly decorated ornaments of costly stones, and many other decorated potteries. "The significant beauty of the two broken 'Jakhini' images is a remarkable thing. The images are bi-facial, possibly these were used as coverlids of some large earthen jars. Images are wearing helmets which resemble the Roman type" (Dasgupta).

Besides, a large number of potteries, terracotta figurines, copper coins, and gold coins of the Gupta period has also been discovered from various parts of Tamluk. The political changes or invasions that had taken place, from time to time in the past, in the adjoining important districts of this State, had affected the lives of its inhabitants. From Chandragupta to Mir Kasem (last Nawab of Bengal) is a long spell of time, interspersed with frequent plundering and subjugation of this area. The *Swadeshi* (National) movement swept over this district in the twenties, and the entire area echoed the spirit of nationalism. Other movements, like the movement against untouchability and the movement of the peasants, along with the *Swadeshi* movement, dealt a fatal blow to the existing caste and social structures of this district. Winds of social change have blown over this area in the trail of these movements.

Temple Survey :

Since the study was mainly concerned with the observation of the variations of religious complexes in the temples and shrines in respect to different people of different traditions living in the villages far and near this urban centre of folk-cult whose nucleus is the institutional set-up, the author had picked up all sacred centres of this municipal town. Thus, all sacred centres ranging from the most propitiated and majestic temple of Goddess *Bargabhima* to the simplest and almost abandoned 'Manasa' shrine at the rear part of the town, and even the functionless and abandoned temples too, have been taken into account for this survey. The temples which have become less important and abandoned have a neglected existence mainly due to economic imbalance of the owners and also for change of religious attitude of the people. For example, at present, the enthusiasm for worshipping Lord *Hanuman* i.e. the monkey-god, a great devotee of Sri Ramchandra, is found to be flagging, because thus so-called glorious bravery and great sacrifice make no appeal to the people, and hence the people have no reverence for worshipping this deity. Moreover, a monkey deity can no more be propitiated with discriminating conscience and satisfaction for fulfilling the desire of the common people, which indicates a shift of religious activities of the devotees. Naturally, through negligence, the temple is eventually becoming abandoned, broken and is now in wretched condition. But it is equally interesting to note here that the temples of *Siva* (the God of Destruction), who feels satisfied by the simplest prayer and offering of the wood-apple leaves only, also seems to be gradually abandoned. There is a *Siva* temple situated at the most busiest centre of the town, known as 'Chakreswar *Siva* Temple', which was never found open during the period of our survey. The other *Siva* temple (*Ambikeshwar*) regains its pre-eminence and dignity only during the yearly festival of *Sivaratri*, which is held on the fourteenth of the dark-half of the month of *Phalgun* (February-March), when a huge number of devotees come to worship the deity. While entering the town from *Panskura/Mecheda*, the religious centre which is met first is the famous shrine of 'Manik Pir'

where every bus conductor pays a customary salutation fee in the hope of being assured of trouble-free journey. Proceeding a little further, one finds the ruin of a palace, which stands on the other side of the Tamluk Police Station. Then a little further again the temples of Ram-Lakshman and Sarbamangala, Jagannath temple and Jishmuhari temple are situated in close proximity. Proceeding further towards the south is seen the Chakreswar Siva temple situated beside the Municipal office. Then comes Harirbazar, behind which is a temple of Mahaprabhu Chaitanya. A little southward from Harirbazar is situated the famous temple of Bargabhma, on an elevated place, which attracts everyone for its conspicuous situation. Then keeping behind the chief shops of the town and taking a turn to the right through the metalled road, one finds the 'Bvanpara Sitala' temple. Besides this, there is the 'Hanumanjee' temple, which is never found open, and at the bus-stand near the petrol-filling station, is the temple of Ram-Lakshmana. Besides, the above-mentioned temples, there are other temples too i.e., two Siva temples and three Sitala temples and one Manasa shrine, and also other temples where the Harijans (untouchable scavengers) offer worship. The temple of the Harijans are situated in their own hamlets.

Of all the temples, the temples of Bargabhma is considered as one of the pithas or the most sacred place of Mother Sakti. But some researchers suspect that it has been installed originally on a Buddhist Stupa (mound) after the decline of Buddhism in this area. Hence it is located on an elevated place.

Table I contains the necessary abstracts with regard to the organisational set-up and other aspects of the temples surveyed.

TABLE I
Particulars of the Temples

Sl. No.	Name of the Deity	Location	Nature of the Deity	Propitiation	Probable Date of Establishment	Remarks
1.	Bargabhinia	Parbatipur	Sanskritic	Brahman priest assisted by other caste groups	Post-Bhuddist period	Temple is situated on an elevated place. Three apartments; brick-built, thick walls
2.	Jishnuhari	Padambasan	Sanskritic	Brahman priest	1500 A.D.	Brick-built structure
3.	Jagannath	Padambasan	Sanskritic	"	1565 to 1645 A.D.	Terracotta bricks; Bengal and Orissa style
4.	Ram-Lakshman	"	"	"	1767 to 1770 A.D.	"
5.	Sarbamangala	"	"	"	"	"
6.	Mahaprabhu	"	"	"	"	"
7.	Krishna temple	Rajbari	"	"	1737 A.D.	Terracotta bricks; Bengal type
8.	Banyasore Sitala	Parbatipur	"	"	1800 A.D.	Brick-built; very popular
9.	Ambikeswar	Dharinda	"	"	1815 A.D.	"
10.	Sitala (2)	"	"	"	1850 to 1860 A.D.	"
11.	Manik Pir	Padambasan	Muslim	Muslim widow	1550 to 1698 A.D.	Thatched hut
12.	Sitala and Mangalechandi	Sankara (Kakargachi)	"	A widow of the locality and a scavenger		Brick-built (small)

Devotees :

Details of the description of the temple architecture, conography, description of the images installed therein, and daily services along with social organisation of the temples have been avoided here. Other phases like, daily services—when day begins—breakfast—ceremony of waving of lamp i.e. *Arati*, midday meal, evening service and meal, retirement and annual festivals, etc. have been recorded. Ownership, priesthood and other aspects centering round the temples have also been avoided. Only the details of worships/propitiations have been noted here to show the nature of prominence of the deities.

TABLE II
Total Worships and frequency of the visitors

Sl. No.	Temples/Shrines	Total Worships	First Time Visit	More Than One
1.	Baragabhima	536	8	528
2.	Mahaprabhu	16	1	15
3.	Ram-Lakshman	25	2	23
4.	Jishnuhari	11	2	9
5.	Manik Pir	17	—	17
	Total :	605	13	592

In other temples the deities were not worshipped by outside devotees during our survey. Hence these have also been avoided. There are daily offerings including *Arati* by the respective temple priests, as arranged by the owners. Table II shows that out of 536 total propitiations at Bargabhima temple, 8 devotees came for the first time. Others have visited the temple more than once. It may be that the new visitors, found at the time of our survey, may visit the temple again, if they make such vow, or if their desires are fulfilled. Some of the devotees stop coming subsequently, but their places are filled up by the fresh devotees. In this way, the cyclical chain continues; the devotees are drawn by these deities by some unforeseen force.

The devotees constitute variegated castes and communities and come not only from the municipal town, but also from outside. Table III furnishes details of caste and community composition of the devotees.

TABLE III

Caste and Community composition of the devotees

Sl. No	Caste/Communities	Frequency	Barga- bhuna	Maha- prabhu	Raru- Laksh- man	Jishnu- hari	Manik Pir
1.	Brahman/Priest	115	105	—	6	2	2
2.	Kayasthya	135	122	3	4	4	2
3.	Valdya	10	8	1	1	—	—
4.	Mahisya	270	247	5	9	3	6
5.	Subarna Banik	7	3	—	3	1	—
6.	Gandha Banik	1	1	—	—	—	—
7.	Khatriya	2	0	—	1	1	—
8.	Karmakar	2	2	—	—	—	—
9.	Vaishnab	12	5	7	—	—	—
10.	Mayra	1	1	—	—	—	—
11.	Goala	7	3	—	—	—	—
12.	Rajput	6	6	—	—	—	—
13.	Malakar	1	1	—	—	—	—
14.	Kamar	1	1	—	—	—	—
15.	Kumbhakar	1	1	—	—	—	—
16.	Napit/Paraman:k	2	2	—	—	—	—
17.	Tanti (Weaver)	2	0	—	1	—	1
18.	Teli (Oil-presser)	4	14	—	—	—	—
19.	Tamali (Betel-leaf cultivator)	5	5	—	—	—	—
20.	Raju	6	6	—	—	—	—
21.	Namasudra	3	3	—	—	—	—
22.	Bagdi	1	1	—	—	—	—
23.	Bagal	1	1	—	—	—	—
24.	Dom	1	1	—	—	—	—
25.	Bauri	2	2	—	—	—	—
26.	Kaibarta	1	2	—	—	—	—
27.	Manjhi	1	1	—	—	—	—
28.	Chutar/Carpenter	1	1	—	—	—	—
29.	Kora	1	1	—	—	—	—
30.	Muslim	3	1	—	—	—	—
Total		605	536	16	25	11	17

The worship of Mangalchandi and Sitala etc. is done by the scavenger community, and this is not at all attended by other castes. Hence these worships have not been recorded. It has been said earlier that the devotees constitute variegated caste and community groups having distinctive occupation as

well as social status. It will be interesting to note whether they live in the locality, or have come from outside the municipal town. Table IV shows the approximate distance travelled by the devotees to offer their respective worships.

TABLE IV

Distance Travelled by the Devotees to offer worship

Temples/Sacred Centres	Total Worshippers	Miles Travelled				
		0-1	2-5	6-10	11-25	25-above
Bargabhimma	536	208	201	95	30	2
Mahaprabhu	16	9	4	3	—	—
Ram-Lakshman	25	22	2	1	—	—
Jishnuhari	11	10	1	—	—	—
Manik Pir	17	9	4	3	1	—
Total:	605	258	212	102	31	2

It will be seen from Table IV that Bargabhimma attracts more devotees from the rural area i.e. outside the municipal town, whereas other deities have more or less customary regular devotees who offer their worship and this has become traditional.

Purpose :

The devotees attend the temples for various purposes. These are related to their actual life situations, in which they find no other alternative except to depend on the deities who are considered by them to be the chief controllers of human destiny. Thus to the people, this aspect of religion supports and conserves an on-going society. Man's helpless situation or uncertainty in life, often compels him to depend on supernatural, to have favour so that he can overcome or combat the adverse situations. Thus religious beliefs and practices will continue so long man has fear, desire, envy, jealousy, lust for grabbing, remorse for loss and so forth. Until the innate instincts of man are satiated, he will depend on and indulge in religious beliefs and practices. Man will ever run about under the impulses of these instincts, to have their pragmatic application in day to day life. Table V gives details of the purposes for which the devotees are said to have visited these sacred centres.

TABLE V

Purposes of visit

Sl. No.	Purpose	Barga- bhima	Maha- prabhu	Ram- Lakshman	Jishnu- hari	Manik Pir
1.	Vow to have male child	13	—	3	—	—
2.	Fulfilment of vow (do)	12	—	1	—	—
3.	Vow for curing illness	35	1	1	—	—
4.	Vow to have service	4	—	—	—	—
5.	After getting a service	9	—	—	—	—
6.	Promotion in service	11	—	1	—	—
7.	On the day of First- rice-eating	4	2	2	—	—
8.	For more profit in business	19	1	—	—	—
9.	On marriage day	4	—	2	—	—
10.	Vow for better educa- tion	43	4	2	—	—
11.	Winning a law suit	16	—	2	2	—
12.	After getting wealth/ good harvest	16	—	2	2	—
13.	Ceremonial entrance into new house	9	—	6	2	—
14.	Success in opera perfor- mance	1	—	—	—	—
15.	To get husband's love	1	—	—	—	—
16.	Buying land (Residen- tial)	1	—	—	—	—
17.	To control over evil planet	2	—	—	—	—
18.	Good fishing	1	—	—	—	—
19.	Contesting election	7	—	—	—	—
20.	Reverence	45	3	—	3	—
21.	To have family peace	23	4	4	—	—
22.	Perfection in boat making	1	—	—	—	—
23.	Customary worship	17	—	—	—	—
24.	Birthday blessing	2	—	—	—	—
25.	After cure of disease	17	1	1	—	—
26.	For getting back a lost article/child	2	—	—	—	1
27.	To stop transfer in service	1	—	—	—	—

TABLE V (Contd.)

Purposes of visit

Sl. No.	Purpose	Bargabhima	Mahaprabhu	Ram-Lakshman	Jishnu-hari	Manik Pir
28.	Trouble-free delivery of breast milk	3	—	—	—	1
29.	Recovery from cattle disease	4	—	—	—	9
30.	To have missing calf—	—	—	—	—	4
31.	For good quantity of cow milk	—	—	—	—	2
	Total :	536	16	25	11	17

Though the purpose of worship differ significantly, it can be said that most of the worships are done for the material or immediate benefit of the person or his family. Only 45 cases are found in cases of Bargabhima, where the worships were done in reverence, which has relation with the ethic or moral sense. In its phenomenological aspect, it can be said that this ritual *vis-a-vis* religious belief is concerned with the power of the sacred over men or secure the blessings of God in adverse situations of life. This is done by the supposed operation of sacred power through propitiation, i.e., through offering, prayers and sacrifice. The purpose to have favour from Manik Pir is of different nature. It is generally concerned with curing cattle diseases and milkcalf complex, which are more associated with the actualities of the poor peasants in their various life situations. Devotees of Manik Pir are Hindus in most of the cases. Only two Muslims have offered worship to the Pir. The cases of worship done for having family peace are 231 in case of Bargabhima, 4 in case of Mahaprabhu and 4 in case of Ram-Lakshman. These are associated with contingent background of the head of the family, to have more security in life.

Offerings :

Offerings to the deities are of varied nature and these are very traditional. For each deity a specific type of offering has to be made and then worship or propitiation is done by the

sacred specialist, i.e., priest, in case of the temples, whereas the worship of Manik Pir is done by a Muslim named Mosa Sah.

TABLE VI
Nature of offerings

Sl. No.	Type of offerings	Barga- bhima	Maha- prabhu	Ram- Lakshman	Jishnu- hari	Manik Pir
1.	Monda (Sandesh) Sweet of special type	387	15	6	2	—
2.	Monda with vermillion	7	—	—	—	—
3.	Puffed sugar-cake (Batasa)	73	1	4	3	5
4.	Monda with Saree	10	—	—	—	—
5.	Naibadya/fruits mainly with puffed sugar-cake	16	—	11	6	—
6.	Porridge	8	—	3	—	—
7.	Annabhog without sol fish	10	—	—	—	—
8.	Annabhog with sol fish	15	—	—	—	—
9.	Milk and flower	10	—	—	—	9
10.	Raw food articles (Sidha)	—	—	1	—	3
Total		536	16	25	11	17

Sweets for worship cannot be purchased from all sweetmeat shops due to some caste and religious restrictions. There are some special shops which are authorised to do this. In case of Bargabhima, cooked rice (vegetarian meal), sometimes with a curry of sol fish, is offered besides the normal daily offerings by the owner. When this type of midday meal or evening meal is offered, the door is kept closed for a few minutes. After that, the consecrated food is taken and if propitiation and offerings are done by the devotees coming for outside, then these are given them back. On the whole, offerings given by the outsider devotees are returned to them and a servicing charge in the name of salutation fee is taken. For this there is organisational set-up of the respective temples.

Conclusion :

The changing values and attitudes in popular Hindusim have induced great variations in its concepts and beliefs, which are reflected significantly through the cultural life of the people

living in this town and in the adjoining areas. It has been said that it is very difficult to define Hinduism in rigid terms. Some think, it comprises a mass of different beliefs, opinions, usages, observances and religious and social ideas in which certain principles are commonly accepted. Diversity is its very essence and proper manifestations are sects. Sect, as it is meant by Hinduism, is again extremely fissiparous and mobile, and has a constant tendency towards further subdivisions, and its parallel in other religions could hardly be found. Caste is another important aspect of Hinduism in which heterogenous traditions, cultures and characters have been distinctly grouped together. It is again, as Bose (1967) said, "In India the cultures of the conquerers became more or less, fused with the culture of the conquered for it was all a slow and long-drawn out process. And thus came into being that federation of cultres popularly known as Hinduism". It is more a social than religious organisation, as it has absorbed different faiths in its fold. Thus gradual assimilation of different faiths, ideas and rituals are a result of continuous interaction of different social and political and economic forces ruling the lives of the people, living side by side for centuries together. Thus changes in the economic life brought about corresponding changes in different degrees, in other spheres. In that case, the soul of culture remains unchanged, while other aspects, specially the peripheral traits, are expected to change in time space-dimension. It can be easily discernible from the nature of purposes of worship by the devotees of various deities. The purposes vary according to the need of the individual situation, and thus these different slants, incorporating many other elements into the matrix of the main culture.

Thus gradual absorption of different religeo-cultural trends within the structure of Hinduism has developed an elastic and widely acceptable mythology and other aspects of religion, in course of time. Though the purposes of worship vary from man to man and deity to deity, the *modus operandi* or the ritual performances done for the appeasement of the deities have more or less remained static, and these are

continuing through the media of sacred specialists, centering around the sacred institutions. Thus the core ideas propagated through them have remained unchanged for a considerable length of time, signifying the essence of continuity in Hinduism and its pragmatic structure.

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17. *CONCEPTS OF DISEASE & DISEASE GODS AND GODDESSES¹*

Introduction

Sickness and diseases are as old as the human civilization. These are vital problems of human society and have caused serious crisis from time to time, from the food-gathering stage to the present complex sophisticated life. Naturally for relief, from these scourges human groups of different times and climes have tried to diagnose of these diseases to invent remedial measures. The primitive people attributed these to the malign of human, spiritual and supernatural agencies, rather than biological causes. These gradually led to the concept and origin of various disease-making gods and goddesses and formulation of certain set ritualistic procedures to appease them for cure, which gradually became institutionalised and persist in some form or other among the various groups of people all over the world even today. They believe that these supernatural agencies of graded potentialities and power, control the destiny of human beings.

Through systematic patterns of behaviour and belief systems they attempt to deal with man's relation with this non-empirical world and all other basic contingencies of life of which illness and death constitute two serious problems. These normally involve performances of certain types of ritual actions to propitiate this mysterious and unknown world, or controlling these unknown forces through some specialists to have desired results. This supernatural world of faith still lies outside the range of scientific observation and analysis. Besides, human agencies like some

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individuals having occult powers are also sometimes believed to indulge in mischief making and causing diseases. Their evil acts are also counteracted by occult means and ritual performances through other specialists.

Attempts have been made in this paper to examine the nature of concepts of diseases prevalent in rural Bengal among various groups on the one hand, and to assess the extent and nature of their faith in such ritual performances and effectiveness of the types of such treatments on the other. Besides, how various gods & goddesses are attributed with the malign powers of causing specific types of diseases and how they are appeased by the individual concerned for cure have also been discussed. It is found that various notions are attached to or various values are so oriented in different human societies regarding the concepts of diseases that they cannot think of any alternative measures of treatment, except those embedded in their traditional beliefs. Thus the people in most of the cases offer unconscious resistance to many modern types of medical treatments or avoid these altogether.

Medicine and disease have an undeniable effect on the history and culture of mankind. Therefore, in order to understand the culture of a particular period, it is also necessary to pay special attention to assessing the health status of the human groups involved. It is, therefore, an essential need to find out what people do when they become sick or ill and what are the concepts of treatment. A systematic fieldwork on these aspects was conducted by Sm. Pratima Das Chowdhury, a University Research Scholar attached to my Department, in some rural and urban centres. Most of the cases relate to villages and a few cases were studied in different zonal pockets of the city of Calcutta, to find out how far the traditional belief systems still continue and what changes have occurred in them. The information was collected through a set schedule after interview with the informants. The following places were surveyed during the study.

TABLE I
Particulars of survey

A. Midnapur District

Sl. No.	Name of village	Sub-division	Type of village
1	Pairachali	Tamluk	Heterogenous multicaste
2	Radhaballavpur	"	"
3	Astara	"	"
4	Nakbasan	"	"
5	Padumbasan	"	"
6	Fulgeria	Sadar South P.S. Narayangarh	"
7	Kasba	"	with Muslim
8	Dasagram	" P.S. Sabang	Multicaste
9	Khajuri—Balichak	"	"
10	Ada Simla	"	"
11	Sarisha	"	"
B.	Calcutta City	Calcutta	Heterogenous
1	Shyam Bazar	"	"
2	Bhowanipur	"	"
3	Kalighat	"	"

So far the villages are concerned almost all of them have no hospital. There is also no sanitary provision in a scientific way. But tubewells are found in all these villages. A few villages have local physician, quacks, sorcerers or *gunins* to counteract the evil spirits. Allopathic physicians are found a little away from these villages. There are Brahmans also. They propitiate the goddess and perform the rituals of the families concerned in a traditional way. They also appease the spirits and perform purificatory ceremonies. Almost all the villages have sanctuaries specially shrines of goddess Sitala and other deities who are worshipped annually jointly by the villagers. Individual families, specially the higher caste affluent families of the villages have conical raised earthen mounds with a *Tulasi* plant on it and *Manasa* plant by its side in their respective courtyards.

This study has laid emphasis on caste with a view to note how far caste has got any relevancy with a particular situation and the mode of ritual performances observed to tackle it. Table 2

gives the details of caste composition of all the villages and that of a few Wards of the city of Calcutta covered by this study.

TABLE 2
Number of caste and family

Sl. No.	Caste name	Traditional occupation	No. of family		Total
			Rural	Urban	
1	Brahman	Priesthood/worship	36	22	58
2	Kayastha	Scribe	22	31	53
3	Mahichya	Agriculturist/land-holding	59	1	60
4	Sadgop	"	16	—	16
5	Napit	Barber	8	3	11
6	Kansa Banik	Bell-metal dealer	—	4	4
7	Kamar	Blacksmith	8	—	8
8	Tili	Oil presser	7	5	12
9	Malakar	Florist	2	—	2
10	Tanti	Weaver	16	2	18
11	Goala	Milkman	3	—	3
12	Dandachbatra				
	Majhi	Fisherman	13	—	13
13	Dhopa	Washerman	10	—	10
14	Hadi	Sweeper	4	—	4
15	Behara (Dule)	Palanquin bearer	3	—	3
16	Baishnav	Sect	6	—	6
Total:			213	68	281

Enquiries were made in each family to record the types of illness or disease for a period of one year. There were a good number of respondents and the number of diseases recorded were 1633 in rural area and 618 in urban area, totalling 2251. Sex, age and types of diseases have also been recorded in details for each concept as well as their treatment patterns.

The types of diseases recorded in course of this field survey are altogether 63. These diseases were again categorised into distinctive groups for convenience of analytical study. There are some local names for the diseases prevalent in the area.

TABLE 3

Disease groups

Group	Diseases	Particulars	Total
1	Common infections	(i) Cold-cough (ii) pox (iii) typhoid (iv) diarrhoea (v) measles (vi) influenza (vii) cholera (viii) dysentery (ix) hooping cough (x) diphtheria (xi) tetanus (xii) eye conjunctivities	11
2	Cardiac	(i) Heart trouble (ii) blood pressure (iii) anæmia	3
3	Gastro-intestinal	(i) Dyspepsia (ii) acidity (iii) jaundice (iv) gastritis (v) colic pain	5
4	Gynæcological	(i) Menstrual trouble (ii) leucorrhœa (iii) amenorrhœa (iv) diseases of uterus and ovaries	4
5	Metabolic	(i) Ricket (ii) diabètes (iii) gout	3
6	Skin disease	(i) Itching (ii) exzema (iii) skin-boil	3
7	Nerve	(i) Sciatica (ii) paralysis (iii) hysteria (iv) nervous breakdown	4
8	Lungs	(i) T. B. (ii) bronchitis (iii) asthma (iv) pleuresy (v) lung abscess (vi) pneu- monia	6
9	Eye	(i) Blindness (ii) pain in eye (iii) cata- ract	6
10	E. N. T.	(i) Ear running (ii) pain in ear (iii) deafness (iv) nose bleed	4
11	Liver	(i) Enlargement of liver (ii) pain in liver (iii) serosis	3
12	Renal	(i) Gall stone (ii) kidney trouble	2
13	Dental	(i) Pyorrhœa (ii) dental trouble	2
14	V. D.	(i) Gonorrhœa	1
15	Injury	(i) Snake bite (ii) accident	2
16	Unclassified	(i) Hernia (ii) cancer (iii) tumour (iv) evil eye (v) evil spirit (vi) evil wind possession	6

Table 4 below depicts details of rural-urban ratio and disease-group distribution.

TABLE 4
Rural-Urban distribution of disease groups (All castes)

Disease groups	Rural (1633)	Urban (618)	Total (2251)
1	674	240	914
2	51	40	91
3	204	88	292
4	40	25	65
5	117	40	157
6	107	23	130
7	88	31	119
8	58	30	88
9	39	21	60
10	12	8	20
11	39	16	55
12	8	7	15
13	58	21	79
14	17	1	18
15	18	10	28
16	103	17	120
Total : 16	1633	618	2251

It is very interesting to note here that in urban area disease-group 2 dominates. This includes gastro-intestinal trouble etc. In rural area it is not so acute. Again, disease group 4 is also preponderant in the urban area. Such is the case of disease group 8. Disease group 9 i.e. eye diseases are also dominant in urban area. Disease group 12 or renal troubles are also dominant in urban area. Again disease group 16 is more pronounced in rural setting.

Many people erroneously think that disease is an unavoidable calamity. But physicians and scientists think that disease occurs due to some specific causes. Some diseases occur due to want of proper nourishment and some are attributed to constitutional or genetic conditions. Diseases grow due to infiltration of foreign bodies or bacteria. In many cases disease-germs are the cause of cold (virus), cholera, typhoid, tuberculosis etc. In respect of concept of disease it requires certain abstraction to describe it. These explanations do not stand to support the causation of any disease. In truest sense, when someone speaks of the concept of disease held by a group

of people. It does not indicate any exactly formulated idea, yet directs their behaviour and reaction towards the features of the environment and points to the prevailing mores of the culture of the society concerned and these are traditionally handed down to the posterity who are strictly guided by these beliefs. The most important element of the concept of disease is the factor of causation. As such the concept of disease can be fruitfully studied through the study of etiology.

In most of the indigenous medical systems, the primary consideration in the diagnosis of a disease is its cause and it tries to establish a relationship between the victim of illness and his surroundings as the relationship can be pathologically interpreted. The traditional etiologies may attribute illness to biological and religious cause. Etiology of a disease can be described as an emic phenomena, that is, as they are perceived by the members of a group, who utilise them to explain why illness occurs. But from the standpoint of an observer who sees connections between the phenomena that are not necessarily perceived by any one group, it is an etical phenomenon. However, the causes have been grouped into 3 main classes as done by Rivers (1924). But the sub-classes or categorisation has been done due to local situation affected by culture and environmental variations. Table 5 gives the details of classification and sub-classification and Table 6 shows the 'Concept-disease group distribution' in rural-urban setting.

TABLE 5
Types of Concept

Sl. No.	Causes	Sub-type	Particulars
1	Natural	A	Heat, cold, climatic fluctuation, Mal-nutrition, irregularity in food habit.
2	Supernatural	B	Germ/hereditary or genetic factor.
		C	Mahadev/Siv/Hari/Narayana/Manik-pir (Muslim), Ghantakarna/Ghetu/Jarasur/Jarapatra/Panchananda/Sitla/Kali / Chandi/Olaichandi / Manasa/Bipattarini/Raktabati/Pepal tree.
		D	Ill-deed/Karmaphal of previous life.
		E	Evil spirit/Jokha/Spirit of the animal.
		F	Action of the planets and stars like Sani, Rahu.
3	Human agency	G	Sorcerer, Magician, <i>O/ha</i> .
		H	Evil mouth/eye, Witch/Dain.

TABLE 6

Concept/Disease group distribution (Rural-Urban)

Disease		Concepts									Total
Group		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	O	
1	R	350	87	166	19	5	10	1	1	35	674
	U	72	82	45	2	2	2	1	—	34	243
2	R	14	—	5	16	5	10	—	—	1	51
	U	9	—	9	5	11	4	—	—	2	40
3	R	73	9	23	44	10	25	—	—	20	204
	U	25	15	10	8	14	7	—	—	9	88
4	R	10	2	5	12	8	3	—	—	—	40
	U	1	4	2	7	9	2	—	—	—	25
5	R	63	1	7	23	8	7	3	5	—	117
	U	20	1	5	3	5	6	—	—	—	40
6	R	62	23	5	10	3	—	—	—	4	107
	U	6	7	5	1	1	—	—	—	3	23
7	R	13	3	3	43	14	12	—	—	—	88
	U	5	1	8	9	5	3	—	—	—	31
8	R	15	8	—	15	3	9	—	—	8	58
	U	10	1	3	5	9	2	—	—	—	30
9	R	11	1	3	—	2	—	—	—	22	39
	U	5	2	4	—	2	2	—	—	6	21
10	R	6	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	4	12
	U	4	—	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	8
11	R	10	—	—	1	—	2	—	—	26	39
	U	2	—	5	1	—	—	—	—	8	16
12	R	3	—	—	1	—	2	—	—	21	8
	U	—	2	1	—	1	1	—	—	2	7
13	R	41	4	—	6	2	4	—	—	3	58
	U	12	5	—	—	1	1	—	—	2	21
14	R	4	2	—	6	1	1	—	—	5	17
	U	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
15	R	3	—	2	2	2	1	—	—	8	18
	U	—	—	3	—	1	4	—	—	2	10
16	R	1	—	3	8	25	1	7	37	21	103
	U	1	—	2	—	1	4	7	1	1	17
Total: R 1633											
U 618											

The concepts stand as mentioned in Tables 5 'O' in Table 6 signifies 'no response' 'no concept' of the interviewer. It can be said here that in urban area almost all the concepts of disease groups are related to concept 'B' i. e. germ, hereditary

or genetic factors. It is to be noted here that in the cases of disease groups 12, 13, 14, i. e. renal, dental and V. D. concepts are not linked to supernatural potentialities i. e. 'C'. Again, concepts of D, E and F are also in vogue in all types of diseases. These concepts include as mentioned in Table 6 ill deed/or Karmaphal of previous life which controls the present state of life ; evil spirit, spirit of Jokha/or the spirits of animals and action of the planets and stars. Strikingly enough, belief in sorcerer and magician or *Ojha/Gunin* is becoming less even in the rural society. The activities of evil eye i. e. the influence of witch or *Dain* are less pronounced in all these cases. But the *Gunins* are found in the rural society and when a man is in need of the services of a sorcerer for the contingency of treating sanke-bite, or spirit possession, then they are called to attend. (See Bhowmick, 1973, *Functioning Secret Institutions : Journal of Social Research*), Again, concepts have been categorised on the basis of economic status and literacy elsewhere. It has been observed that in the present society (rural and urban) people do not believe in 'one cause, one disease' concept. There are unicausal and multicausal beliefs and concepts existing side by side.

On many occasions the people (Bengalee Hindus) specially think the diseases as a moral and physical crisis caused by some spirits or supernatural world and as such they try to adjust themselves with these divinities or the supernatural potentialities accordingly. It is also believed that the world is infested with spirits of varied nature, some benevolent and the others malevolent and so either they are worshipped or appeased or offered sacrifice to win their favour for overcoming the crisis of life.

The concept of gods and goddesses is very old tradition and this is set on the thickly woven fabric of the various groups of people everywhere. Under the fabric of religion, this ultimate belief system continues and ties the individual with the society, though activities can be divided into two, one for personal or individual benefit and the other for the society, i. e. village, locality etc. But in many cases it has been observed that the

two complexes have been overlapped or inextricably interlaced with each other. During crisis of life people take vow to supposedly controlling deities as well as gods and goddesses whom they think responsible for the protection of the individual or the village from the danger.

Gods and goddesses :

Mahadeva/Siva : Siva is regarded as one of the three important Gods and He is considered as All Destroyer. He is known as Mahadeva, i. e. greatest of all gods. In the present study He is found to have been worshipped for different types of pain, such as, lever pain, colic pain, rheumatism, gout, cardiac and urban people. He carries an iron trident, i. e. *Trisul*. So 'Sul' has got relation with pain as it pierces and causes pain. According to some, negligence to parents or any type of evil deed makes Lord Siva angry, the result of which is causation of some painful diseases. Thus in urban areas, disease group II i. e. lever serosis, enlargement etc are attributed to his anger. He has the power to cure the patient if he is properly worshipped. There are many Siva temples and some of these are considered very important, for example, the Tarakeswar temple at Tarakeswar (Eastern Railway) is famous for its therapeutic activities. The Chandaneswar temple at Bengal-Orissa border has similar reputation. There are a good number of local names for this deity as well as the temples like, Ambikeswara, Mukteswara, Baneswara, Satyeswara etc. where the stone phallic symbol (Linga) has been installed. Unboiled milk, water of green coconut, leaves of *bel* etc. are offered to him with sandal paste. Amulets are offered by the temple priest to the people seeking mercy of the god or cure. In many cases advance prayer is made by hanging a stone chip tied by a red waist-cord (*Ghunsi*) at the temple side, at the time of pronouncing vow. After fulfilment of the vow, elaborate worship is done as promised.

2. *Hari/Narayana/Vishnu* : He is also one of the three principal gods and considered as All Mighty. Though he is considered as a very peace-loving god, yet he is thought to be responsible for causation and cure of various diseases, as the data given

would reveal. Disease group 1, i. e. tetanus is attributed to him. Gynaecological diseases are also attributed to him. In some urban areas, disease group 7 related to nerve are thought to occur due to his wrath. He is worshipped by the Brahman priest generally in the form of a black stone emblem, i. e. 'Narayana Sila'. Sweets, green vegetables and sun-dried rice are generally offered to him along with sandal paste and *durba*.

3. *Manik Pir* : This is a Muslim sanctuary where a Moham-medan mendicant of repute is buried. In many places of rural Bengal, a small shrine is constructed on it, where all sections of the people irrespective of castes go and make a vow to the Pir to offer sweets, praying for cure of their diseases or of their children. Manik Pir is believed to cure the diseases of the children.

4. *Ghantakarna/Ghetu* : Ghantakarna is popularly known as Ghetu though his image is associated with goddess Sitala or Chandi in a team of five. He is the controlling deity of all types of skin diseases. There is no permanent shrine for his worship. He has fair skin colour with two hands and two eyes. A special worship is done by the patient suffering from skin diseases. For his worship in many cases the services of the Brahman are requisitioned. In some cases also the elderly women are found to do it themselves. Generally the articles of worship are brought in an earthen pot, which is broken on the spot after the worship. Broken winnowing fans, used earthen pots etc. are also heaped by the place of worship. 21 cowrie shells, cowdung and a piece of new cloth coloured yellow by turmeric solution is offered to him. It is generally done on the last day of the Bengali month of Bhadra (Aug-Sept) or Phalgun (Feb-Mar). He is considered to be a folk-deity and in course of time has been gradually included in the Hindu pantheon.

5. *Jarasura/Jarapatra* : Jarasura or Jarapatra is one of the associates of goddess Sitala. In rare cases he has a special shrine. He is the controlling deity of all types of fever. His image is very peculiar. His body colour is deep-blue with dark tinge. He possesses three heads, nine eyes, six hands and three

legs. He bears hair as well as moustache. He also wears many ornaments. A Brahman priest worships him. In all Sitala worships he must be worshipped.

6. *Panchananda* : He is popularly known as Panchu Thakur. He is worshipped for the cure of child diseases. Some barren women also worship him to get a child. His image is very peculiar. complexion is deep red or black. He has long matted hair which is tied in the form of a bundle. Sometimes two horns are found on his head, but it is very rare. He has two wide-open eyes. His two upper canine teeth are large and protruding. Sometimes he is associated with two assistants, who are believed to control the ghosts and spirits. He is pleased if he is called as 'Baba Panchananda,' i. e. Father Panchananda instead of 'Panchu.' He prefers riding. Sweets and sun-dried rice are offered to him by the Brahman priest. There are a few places in many parts of rural Bengal where his idol is found to have been installed. But it is generally done by some women on the 5th day after the birth of a child.

7. *Goddess Sitala* : Sitala is a very ancient folk-deity. We have the evidence of the existence of Sitala since the time of Mahenjodaro. She is also worshipped in many parts of India. She is in charge of the epidemic diseases like pox, measles, etc. She has green complexion with two hand and two eyes. She rides on a donkey and holds a broom-stick in one hand and an earthen pitcher in the other. Sometimes in scorching noon she appears as a forlorn sweet little girl roaming about in the fringe of a village. Some people say that she has innumerable eyes on her head along with her hair. Naturally she can see everything all around. In an earthen pot she carries the lentil of germs of small-pox. From the data it will be found that if the deity gets angry with some one's conduct, such as, if she is touched by an unclean person, or she is not properly propitiated by due offerings, then she turns over her lentilpot on his house. As a result, pox affects all the members of that particular house. But if the diseased person takes proper vow and propitiates her, she is pleased and removes all disease germs from the house by her broom-stick. Pox is known to

the village people as 'Mayer Daya' or 'gift of the mother' and they have to maintain certain restrictions and taboos known 'Mayer Niyam' during an attack or for prevention of pox. A family affected with pox or measles have to keep the house clean and sprinkle holy water from the Ganga. In some cases a herbal medicine is tied around the neck of the patient, which is known as 'Daibya Aushadh' or 'occult medicine'. Apart from the herbal medicine, the patient takes holy water from the pot of Sitala known as *Hemghat*. During such epidemic most of the people take fish other the *Kai*, *Magur* and *Singi* as these are considered to carry the germs of pox. Some kinds of pulses are also avoided and no oil or soap is used during such affection.

Sitala has six sisters, all of whom are equally potent in spreading out contagious diseases. They are known as Ola, Jhola, Kala, Jangi, Banbibí and Narayani. Saturday and Tuesday are considered to be the auspicious days for her worship. Communal worships are also held during the epidemic and other times in which all the villagers participate and contribute voluntarily and a Brahman priest performs the worship.

8. *Goddess Kali*: Goddess Kali is also thought to be responsible for causing different types of fever, bloodshed and accidents. She is thought to control cholera also by a group of people. She is more powerful and considered to be 'Jagrata', i. e. very much responsive and active. The image of the goddess is very strange in appearance. Dark or black in colour with three wide-open eyes, she stands erect with her feet resting on the bosom of Siva, stretching her four hands and the long red tongue. In her four hands she carries different things such as, in right top hand—an axe, in the right lower—a spear, in the left top—a decapitated human head and in the left lower—a skull full of human blood. She wears a necklace of decapitated human heads supposedly killed by her. She wears several human hands tagged by a cord around her waist.

To protect the village from the attack of cholera and other calamities the villagers occasionally worship her. Goat sacrifice

is made to her by a special killer. She is worshipped at dead of night by a Brahman priest. Like Sitala, Tuesday and Saturday are considered to be very auspicious for her worship. In Calcutta, the Kali of Kalighat, that of Lake, the Firingee Kali of Bowbazar and the Kali of Thanthania and Dakshineswar are famous idols. Many people regularly visit all these temples though yearly celebration takes place at the time of Diwali.

9. *Chandi/Otaichandi/Olabibi/Mangal/Chandi*: Goddess Chandi is worshipped for the cure of the diseases of groups 7 and 9 i. e. for nerve and eye troubles. No priest is needed for the worship of Mangal Chandi. Womenfolk perform the ceremony for the welfare of the family. Nobody takes any vow to worship her after the recovery of the disease. But *Olai Chandi* or *Olabibi* is regarded as the controlling deity of *Otautha* or Asiatic type of cholera, from which nobody generally survives. It is so dangerous that after the attack the patient vomits and purges like water at short intervals, his eyes become sunken, spasm of the muscles starts and he dies within a few hours. In many cases *Olabibi* or *Olai Chandi* has images of two types conveniently selected by the people. Sometimes her image is made in the fashion of goddess Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth) with deep yellow colour, two eyes and two heads spreading out. All over the body she wears many ornaments. Sometimes she wears a crown or seen with open hair, with a narrow red mark at hair-parting. Sometimes she is seen to wear Muslim dress. This is due to Muslim influence, but this mode of dress has been incorporated into the matrix of the local folk-culture. There are special shrines for her. Many kinds of sweets and fruits are offered to her. Sometimes she is found along with her sister. Saturday and Tuesday are auspicious days for her worship. Brahman priests or local people offer worship to her.

10. *Manasa*: Goddess *Manasa* is well-known all over Bengal. She is considered to be the controlling deity of the snakes. In almost all the courtyards of the Hindu families in the villages, a branch of the *Manasa* plant is nurtured with care. This plant is worshipped on the day of worship of *Manasa*. In many villages images of this deity are prepared and a duck or swan

is sacrificed to her during the worship. She is considered to be one of the mates of Siva. She is said to have lost an eye in a quarrel with other co-wives. She is girdled from head to foot by different kinds snakes. She is worshipped by Brahman priest with sweets, fruits and unboiled milk. Milk is poured on a Manasa plant during the worship. It is believed snakes come unnoticed there and drink the milk offered to the deity. There are a few days, specially the last day of the months of Jaistha (May-June), Ashar (June-July) and Sravan (July-Aug.) when this deity is worshipped with pomp. From some shrines of Manasa the *Ojhas* or sorcerers advise to the people for prevention and cure of snake-bite and other diseases.

11. *Raktabati*: She is considered to be the daughter of goddess Sitala. She is worshipped along with Sitala by a Brahman priest. Injuries, blood vomiting etc. are supposed to be caused by her. There is no special shrine for this deity. She is worshipped along with the goddess Sitala.

12. *Bipattarini*: The term 'Bipattarini' signifies the deity who can rescue an individual from all types of troubles and dangers. So the people in urban and rural areas take vow to her and wear a new red cord offered by the priest believed to be impregnated with the potentiality of saving one from all dangers. This deity has no anthropomorphic form. She is worshipped by installing a new earthen vessel and ceremonially filling up with water which is known as *ghat*. She is also worshipped by an elderly female (not widow) member of the family. Generally Tuesday and Saturday are considered to be the auspicious days for her worship. It is done on the day of *Rathajatra* i.e. 'Car Festival' in the month of Ashar (May-June). The offerings contain different types of fruits, sweets, betels, betel-nuts, each item being 13 in number. It is worn on the left arm by the women and on the right arm by the men.

13. *Chandrayan Prayaschitta*: This is a purificatory ceremony and is done to wipe off the sins committed by an individual in this life or previous life for which he is supposed to suffer from certain protracted incurable disease. A Brahman priest

worships this deity and many presentations are given to him in the name of god, after the worship. It is believed that the committed sins are thus expiated and the patient will die peacefully without further suffering.

14. *Sani or Saturn* : Saturn is a very powerful planet which is believed to control the fate of all individuals. Hence some taboos and restrictions are observed to appease this planet and get his favour for averting evil influence as also that of other planets.

Our worldly life is beset with frustrations, disappointments, accidents and some odd and excruciating contingencies. Man wants to live very peacefully in this world and as such wants to be more secured and assured about his own pursuits and achievements, and a trouble-free life. Besides we know that fear, desire, envy, jealousy, grabbing, remorse for loss and such other impulses are innate and insatiable instincts of man, which goad him about from one pursuit to another for satisfaction of material and mental needs. He also suffered from certain diseases and pestilences. Naturally for satisfaction of these human urges and needs and for safety, he has to depend upon and surrender to some supernatural potentialities at times, for obtaining divine help when he faces constant failures or suffers from incurable protracted illness. He wants to live a happy and disease-free life. As such many divinities and potentialities are appeased, as they are considered to be the causes of such calamities. Of course there are references of such dependence on divine power even from the time of Atharva Veda, when Ayurveda, i.e. the 'book related to treatment of diseases and longevity' as a scientific discipline was first written in India. There are references in this book of many diseases and even the nature of treatments too. These are of immense help even to the modern physicians, who can take advantage of these valuable recipes.

The local gods and goodesses too, in course of time, due to historical processes of stress, strain and assimilation, have been incorporated into the Hindu pantheon and invested with supposedly curative and materialistic power of granting

the desideratum. Many Aryan ideas, gods and goddesses too have been fused with the local situation according to the belief system of the people. This, in course of time, has reinforced Indian civilization and culture by articulating different belief system to a more rational and elevated level that do not explicitly refer to or depend upon the supernatural or sacred alone, but are also concerned with and conscious of worldly affairs. Naturally this has become an integral part of daily life outside the range of scientific observation and analysis.

The district Midnapur lies in the Burdwan Division in west Bengal which is souther most district of the state. It is, however, border of Bihar and Orissa and is one of the most varried, as regards physical aspects, of the districts in West Bengal. It is termed as Border Bengal by the anthropologists for its geopolitical position. The name Midnapur is a corruption of the vernicular *Medinipur* meaning the city of the world. This name was given by one Medinikar, a chieftain of the thirteenth century Bengal and the author of famous Sanskrit lexion 'Medinikosh.' The north and north-west of the district embraces a portion of Bihar and considerable of a hard laterite formation. The eastern portion has been formed out of the alluvial deposits borne down by the Hooghly and its tributaries from the Gangetic system of upper India which is similar to south and south-west of the country. On the south-west and south, which is geographically part of Orissa, is a maritime tract, subject to tidal waves.

In the early ages, east of the district was occupied by agricultural communities, fishermen, boatmen and sailors. It is known that at the dawn of history, Tamralipti (the modern Tamluk), was a great sea port. On the conquest of Kalinga by the great Asoka, the district became a part and parcel of Mauryan empire. The district subsequently passed under the rule of the Guptas. After the overthrow of the Guptas the districts appears to have formed part of a kingdom under *Devarakshita* in the sixteenth century A. D. The kingdom of Tamralipti survived for several centuries, but was eventually absored in the kingdom of Radha i.e. West Bengal. For about

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four and a half centuries the Oriya kings ruled the district and it is the Muslims who have drove the Oriyas gradually southwards and for a considerable time the river Damodar was the boundry between the kingdoms of Bengal and Orissa. Some idea of the internal state of the century during the administration of the Oriya kings may be gathered from the brief accounts given in the biographies of the great Vaishanava apostle Chaitanya, who in 1509 passed through the district on his way to Puri (Orissa). There are two distinct tracts in the district with two distinct type of spirit of the people. One is 'national' and the other is 'lowest of the low'. The former type represents the predominantly Mahisaya population when the later type is oppressed and dispossessed and is disturbed by race memory of military campaigns and discipline and rapidly turn formidable at short notice.

The area from where the rhymes were collected are Nandigram and Khejuri Police Station of Tamluk sub-division. The area is inhabited by the Mahaisyas-a landholding agricultural community and others like Paundras including the Brahmins belonging to Utkal group.

Introduction

Human groups either big or small, in a well-defined geographical background, are found to express their emotions, experiences and many other interactional feelings, which are manifested in nursery rhymes, folk-songs and riddles. These, in course of time, run from mouth to mouth and get nucleated and crystalised, and ultimately handed down to the posterity. All these are generally considered as oral literature, which had possibly been composed by some unsophisticated folk-poets of unknown past. But the original composer or maker of these verses is gradually forgotten, and these nursery rhymes later become identified with social reflections of all the people as a whole. The very nature of total reflection of human mind and sentiments contained in these rhymes can not be separated from one another just like the series of waves of the ocean. Rather these are considered as integrated whole. The themes of such rhymes are spontaneous, touchy and emotional. These

evoke similar response in the mind of others. Hence the variegated groups living in a common setting become emotion-bound and enthusiastic by their appeal. Common linguistic area infuse a special sense to their contents, understandable to each other among adult individuals, which they share among themselves by joyous participation. Rythm or accent in pronouncintion of the verse arouse a feeling of oneness in the village setting, the themes being very common, although varied in nature and so they touch promptly the core of the heart of each individual. Sometimes very whimsical, irrelevant and scattered subject matters are vented through these rhymes or riddles. So these forms of oral literature are very common in almost all the unsophisticated or pre-literate human societies.

Attempts have been made in this paper to depict or portray the part of women only in propagating and popularising nursery rhymes in the south-eastern tract, specially Nandigram and Khejuri Police Stations of the district of Midnapur, West Bengal. This is criss-crossed by quite a large number of rivulets and irrigational canals, having many planted fruit-bearing trees and wavy paddy fields, with sporadic tanks. Variegated caste groups with distinctive tradition-bound occupations, dominated by agriculture, are the general population of the region. They speak Bengali, but in the pagan language. It resembles an inter-mixture of corrupt Oriya and Bengali. The folk-songs associated with the festivals of Tusu, Bandna, Gajan, Bhadu and Karam prevalent in the western part of this district, which constitute the bulk of oral literature, have been deliberately left out from the contents of this paper, not being rhymes, in the exact sense,

Besides, quite a number of nursery rhymes have already been collected by some interested persons and these have been published in different periodicals and so, these have also been avoided in course of this discussion.

Nursery rhymes are composed in such a way that these could be easily uttered with rythm. If a boy, or a girl happens to utter a single line of it, then somebody, either male or female nearabout, usually joins in it in

chorus and the theme and thoughts are reflected in a melodious way. The nature of accent or pronunciation in the regional dialect creates some mystic and romantic phenomena described so vividly, that these seem more like current events which everybody can see immediately. A naughty boy or a weeping baby is cajoled or caressed by such rhymes, which make the infant-mind thoroughly absorbed in their melodious tone though the baby at that time is not in a position to understand the connotation of these rhymes. Thus it influences the gradual socialisation process informing personality and, as such, it is of great social significance.

Nature

A few nursery rhymes have been classified into the following categories by which the common women have been portrayed in various ways. Their physical features and mental temperament, prevalent economic activities, violation of conventional social taboos and prohibition, illegal and irregular sex-life, appropriateness in dress and decorative pattern, etc. have been considered, to scan the rhymes for such categorisation. Though it is very difficult to translate these rhymes verbatim, yet free translations have been made, keeping the sense intact, to point out the inner contents or the nature of the themes.

(A) Physical feature, physiological condition and nature of temperament.

Amgache kurol gha
Fakrā dañte gu kha.

Free Translation

"A stroke of axe on the mango-tree—

With your lost teeth go and lick human excreta."

When a girl, in course of her age, drops her milk-teeth, then she looks as old woman. The inner contents do not tally with each other. Rather these are irrelevant, yet the nature of utterance of this rhyme ridicules an

individual who has lost his or her milk-teeth for the time being.

- (ii) Garam bhāte tor-torāni
Pākhāl bhate mou,
Dādā āisu kaiya duba—
Futki lāchā Bou.

Free Translation

"The rice-gruel looks wavy—as it flows down—
And this also happens when honey is dropped in the
soaked rice.

I will tell my elder brother that your wife is fidgety."
The smartness of a newly married girl has been depicted in this rhyme.

- (iii) Khāndi, birḍya bāndhi
Chaltā gāche mou,
Kordkordātā tipā dīle
Jomādārer Bou.

Free Translation

"Khandi—I can wrap you in a roll of cloth—
For honey has grown in the *Chalta* tree (impossible) !
If you press the couri-shell—
You will be married to the *Jamadar* (a Police
constable)."

Khandi, a lanky and slim girl has been ironically described here.
The grave temperament of a newly-wed bride has been reflected in the rhyme below.

- (iv) Ānta gāche tota bāsa,
Dālīm gāche mou
Kathā kaisnā kena Bou ?

Free Translation

"There is a nest in a custard-apple tree—
And honey is oozing from the pomegranate tree ;
O bride, why you look so grave ?"

- (v) Laxmi Rāñḍī, kapas kañḍī
Sholo ḍiṅga bāya ;
Cheñoyā mācher bas pāile
Bhātār puriyā khāya.

Free Translation

"Lakshmi—a widow (in abusing term)—
 Is just like a heap of cotton ;
 Who plies sixteen cannoes at a time.
 If she gets the smell of a typical saline fish—
 She can kill her beloved to get a bit of it."

A strong and stout woman has been described here, to portray her obstinate mind.

(B) *Against some unavoidable social conventions*

Generally in rural Bengal infant marriage was in vogue. As such, in many cases, marriage took place between a tiny girl and an old groom. There was no protest against this corrupt practice, but the companions of the bride (baby) usually expressed their resentment in a suppressed voice of protest, as expressed in the following rhyme :—

Kānchan, kānchan dudher sar—
 Kānchān jābe parer ghar,
 Hāita jodi bāper ghar.
 Tuliā khāita dudher sar.
 Ē to hāila parer ghar,
 Kāi pabere dudher sar !
 Khurḍā dila burḍa bar ;
 O khurḍa, tui jole dubiā mar.

Free Translation

"Kanchan a tiny sweet girl was married to an old man. In her father's house she had much liberty and enjoyed many facilities. Even she used to take the cream of milk regularly. But alas ! now she will go to her husband's house and get it no more. Her father is dead. Hence her uncle has negotiated such marriage with an old groom, not caring for her welfare. She has no escape, and so she laments and curses her uncle who did this".

(C) Reflection of bitter or unhealthy familial and social tensions leading to quarrel and mutual assault and torture on

persons involved are the subject matters of the following rhyme.

- (i) Chābās, didi chābās lo
Rāmdhaniā mor bhātar lo
Rāmdhaniār ghar korbani ;
Siithir sindur parbani.

Free Translation

"Behold sisters ! you behold—
Ramdhanian is my husband ;
But, I should no more stay with him—

And I must not put vermilion mark on my hair-parting."

A woman has become infuriated against her husband's misdeeds and she declared not to stay with him any more. She prefers divorce. In another rhyme another idea is depicted.

- (ii) Kānta morḍa mār mārlo
Bhāūlo hāter tarḍ—
Khatī habe kār ?

Free Translation

"Oh Kanta, Oh my dead husband
You have greatly grieved me—
You have broken my armlets and made me widow ;
But whose is the net loss?"

And next,

- (iii) Bisiri gācher jota kāntā
Sauri nanader toto khoūtā.

Free Translation

"As numerous are the thorns of a Bisri plant—
So numerous are the pinching comments (of the mother-in-law and the husband's sister)".
(D) Economic activities and action-patterns or nature of living of the people have been pin-pointed in the following rhymes.

- (a) Gāyeje molā dādā
Shamukhe chāñchi
Mār kote kaibu
Bon barḍa sukhe āchi,
Māthāya jā ukun

Dādā, bāndare bāche
 Mar kote kaibu
 Bon barḍa sukhe āche.

Free Translation

"My body is soiled—
 I have to scrape it with a shell of snail.
 Intimate my mother, I am very happy even so !
 My head is full of lice and monkeys pick them up—
 Tell my mother that still I am very happy here !"

Sister of an individual has been given marriage in a poor family, where she has to suffer a lot of misfortune. There is no hope of a better life. When her elder brother went to see her, she describes her days of miseries of life to him in the above. Below is a different rhyme that expresses a different idea.

- (b) Shān fuler bāra bātigo,
 Madhu fuler ghata,
 Ki fulti futche go
 Kadam gota gola !
 Kadam gācher chhaigo,
 Marich gachher chhāj,
 Barḍa Mami je bhat khāichheni—
 Kāi pābe gayā dai !
 Gāi jāiche ghagra ban
 Bachhur tulche fena,
 Shola bachhari maya
 Jalke jaichhe jhutiar bajna,
 Jhutia kore jhumur jhumur Subdi katadur ?
 Ekla burḍi dhan kute thukur mukur.

Free Translation

"Twelve cups of honey of heamp-plant—
 And multitude of flowers :
 How look these ? Hark ! like the flowers of *Kadam*.
 Ashes of the *Kadam* tree and black pepper mixed
 together.
 So the eldest maternal-aunt refuses to take meal.
 And she demands curd of cow's milk instead,

But the cows have now gone to the nearby jungle—
And the calves stand with foaming mouth.

A maid of sixteen goes to fetch water with her
tinkling anklets.

Tinkling anklets resound in rhythm :

How long is the distance of Subdi (Name of a village)
from here ?

Unconcern, the old women husks alone slowly and
sluggishly."

Here a good unrelated events have been bunched in a myth.
It is uttered with a very distinct pronounciation with proper
accent,

(E) *Illegal sex relations in the village life draw the attention
and the persons involved are not spared. They have been
ridiculed publicly in the following verse.*

- (i) *Gaṅger pani gorge tani,
Pukhturer pani jorḍa,
Satti karia kaithi, didi,
Deor-bhatār ti charḍa.*

Free Translation

"The water of the flowing river has a roaring sound—
And the water of the tank is still and calm.
Oh ! sister, speak frankly :
Don't allow your husband's younger brother—
To soil your chastity."

The system of levirate has been focussed here ridiculing a
woman who is found to have incest or illegal sex-relationship
with her husband's younger brother.

- (ii) *Jhumkar bhātar pakkapan
Didir bhatar musulman.*

Free Translation

"The betels have been cencealed in the tinkling anklets,
And the husband of my sister is a Muslim, they say."
Sometimes an individual is threatened with a comment for his
irregular sex-relationships, as has been specified in the following
rhyme.

- (iii) Mausī tak tausī
 Kolabone ghar
 Ekti kola diluni mausi
 Jami-bhatar ti chtar.

Free Translation

"Oh ! mother's sister, Oh ! mother's sister !
 You stay in a plantain grove—
 But you don't give a single plantain to whoever wants
 it—
 Be cursed, therefore, and marry your daughter's
 husband—
 Which will bring you shame !"

(F) Appropriate dress or ornaments and other possible combination of these do not go unappreciated, when these are visible to an individual as we find in the following verse.

- (i) Tia nake tikiful,
 Khañda nake basor.
 Guria ponde lal sari
 Dhekua ponde tasar.
 Tasar kore khasor mosar
 Tenia para bhala ;
 Dui kore hachar pañchar
 Chalia jāoya bhala.

Free Translation

"On the parrot-nose of a women—
 An ornament like *Tikiful* looks well :
 On the blunt nose—a Basor !
 To a fair-skinned woman, a red-cotton *sari*—
 And to a bulky-hipped, a Tusser fits well !
Tusser should be worn very tightly—
 Than to ride a *Duli*, which gives uncomfōrt."

- (ii) Khaite bhala chaul bhuja,
 Dakhte bhala murđi,
 Rasik bhala ak takar ma
 Dakhte bhala chundi.

Free Translation

"Parched rice is better to eat—

While the fried-rice is nice to see.

Mother of one child, is often very humorous and witty—

While a spinster has charming beauty."

Discussion

A few nursery rhymes have been discussed here, which deal with the various mood of women. It is interesting that many social phenomena, topical types of ornaments and even disharmonious relation, born out of inter-actional scenes, have been noticed by the folk-composers, and these, in course of time, have become the property of the common people. But various factors of urbanisation and new types of educational systems have greatly affected these oral literature, and these are now vanishing fast. If a proper analysis of their subject-matters be made, then many historical processes can be unveiled from the oral literature, in which variegated cultural strains have forged together to develop a sense of integrity among the rural folk.

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Introduction

India is primarily a land of villages, where 82% of her total population live. And, villages are basically aggregates of homesteads, occupied by different castes and communities. Due to a permanent type of settlement, the inhabitants of a village live in close proximity to each other. This sort of living together causes multiple contacts in day-to-day life for various social and economic needs. As a result, a relationship, both interactional and intra-actional, develops among them. And this generates not infrequently a sense of solidarity, factional rivalry or tension.

These villages are mostly demarcated by well-marked boundaries from contiguous areas, and they generally coincide with a revenue unit or *mouza*. Common ecological setting, the common historical background of the inhabitants, group participation in activities of common interest, common inheritance of regard and respect for regional beliefs and customs, the sharing of commonly imbibed ideas and sentiments, all go a long way to bind them with a common tie. They develop in them a sense of oneness. These are traditionally the important ingredients of the village life.

The village has a pattern of economy, all its own. Its economy is practically fully based on agriculture, which requires a strong labour force and considerable financial investment. That economy also is, by and large, governed by many interdependent social factors. The society of an Indian village is to a great extent, influenced by the caste-based economy handed

down by traditions. For generations together a number of occupations are caste-bound and followed without encroachments by others. This pattern has been respected by all communities; yet, in some particular setting, these are so co-ordinated and organised, that the normal way of living of the community is rarely weakened. On the other hand, the communities living in the villages have their systematic occupation patterns, which are reciprocated through service and remunerated in cash or kind.

But the investigations have shown that, imperceptibly changes have crept in the economy and society of the villages. The older economic structure or organisation of a village has greatly changed in many areas due to change in the technology of agriculture, based on new discoveries and innovations, and plenty of employment facilities in industry and other professional jobs of the country. Change in these respects has undoubtedly brought about corresponding transformation in the general social setting of the village accentuated by change in the political set-up of the country as a whole.

An attempt has been made to describe some features of the change that have occurred in a typical Bengal village situated in the district of Midnapur, West Bengal. In course of his investigations (1965-66) the author observed the changes which revolved round the problem under study.

It will be evident from the study how the dominant Brahman caste with their numerical strength, better economic position and ritual-hierarchical supremacy, has acquired the topmost position of power in the social structure of the village surveyed and has been controlling the affairs of the village for a long period since their migration, to this area centuries ago. Social differentiation, which was so long persisting in the village among the various castes and communities, did not give vent to any external outburst for a pretty long time, due to administrative ability and predominant hold of the Brahmans, who were always patronised and backed by the local zemindars. Their ability and commanding position were accentuated further by traditional, age-old values and attitude attached to them.

But, there came in irresistible changes. Owing to fluctuating

vicissitude in the political condition of the country after independence a new interactional phase began subsequently, and communication facilities being extended to the village in recent times, there came about a rapid fragmentation of the rigid village solidarity as well as, transformation in the villagers' behaviour and attitude to the value system, so far prevalent in their social life. It ultimately dealt a blow to the prevailing social system because group cohesion began to be loosened; and this generated a tendency to factional tension or conflicts, accelerated by their radical nature.

The setting

The district of Midnapur is the southernmost district of the Burdwan Division in West Bengal. The western boundary of this district is conterminous with the districts of Balasore and Mayurbhanj in Orissa; and on the north along the border of this district is Bankura, and on the south there is the Bay of Bengal. It is situated between 21°57' north latitude and between 86°33' and 88°11' east longitude.

The western part of this district is not physically distinguishable from the undulated jungle-covered region of the adjacent areas, where a few groups of tribal or tribal derivatives still live. Politically also, this tract was sometimes ruled by Hindu Kings of Orissa, and sometimes by others like, the Pathans, the Moghuls, the Marathas and later by the Europeans. As a result, there had been constant shifting of boundary of this tract, through successive annexations. It is therefore clear that invasions and migrations, due to various historical and economic factors, had affected the peoples living in this area most intensively and in their wake, had brought in frequent changes in the social pattern.

The village *Fulgeria* is located within the Narayangarh Police Station, in the Sadar South Sub-division of Midnapur. It is about 14 miles south from the Kharagpur Railway Junction and 3 miles north-east from the Narayangarh Station of the South Eastern Railway. The Orissa Trunk Road passes along this area about 2½ miles away from this village. There is a regular bus service linking Khargpur and the district head-

quarters of Midnapur. The village is inhabited by a multi-caste population, comprising nine caste or community groups, forming 52 families and a total population of 258.

The village with its typical physical setting would appear, to a casual traveller, as having a dusty, disproportionate main road, bearing marks of constant erosion all over its surface. At times may be seen, a busy school teacher is going on his bicycle. At other times, a batch of children may be found going to a village fair. Mud-build thatched huts of the villagers may be seen further away, along the side of the road, well-fenced with undressed thorny bamboo twigs. From the main metalled road proceeds a narrower road, leaving Mokrapur and Raghunathpur in the north and rows of alluvial paddy fields fanning out for a mile and half in the east, and then touches the tribal village Daharpur.

On the left side of the road, there are a few huts of the untouchable castes like *Hadi/sweeper*, closely followed by those of other lower castes like, *Tanti/weaver*, etc. The *Brahman Para* or the hamlet of the Brahmins, with distinctly demarcated and shapely commodious dwellings of the priests and temples of the deities, is located a little distance away.

The village is then clearly separated by a small canal. On the opposite side of it is the *sudra Para* or the hamlet of the Sudras, who constitute the lowest rung of the hierarchical ladder of the four-tier Hindu social system, with the thatched muddled huts of the *Manjhi/fisherman*, *Malakar/florist*, *Napit/barber*, and *Dhopa/washerman*, marked by their typical tradition-bound occupations. Then, the road leads to the main road, very near to Asnabani, a village forming the southern boundary of Fulgeria, where it has forked off to the south-easterly direction, leading to the Narayangarh Railway station on the South Eastern Railway, and the south-westerly direction to the bank of the rattling Keleghai, which becomes unfordable during the rainy season. On the other side is village Belti, where the Anchal Pradhan resides.

There are a few silted tanks in the village, a few wells for drinking water, a primary school, a sub-post office and the crowded parlour of *Satyewar Mahapatra*—a

Brahman by caste, doing the work of revenue collector in the locality. In the Brahmanpara, one will see very clean courtyards, each having a well-marked pyramidal earthen mound, on which has been placed a plant of sacred basil or *Tulasi* (*Ocimum Sanctum*).

Six clear seasonal changes are observed in this area, and which are all characterised by weather variations along with different agricultural activities and festive cycles. The village wakes up early at dawn, when cocks crow in the hamlet of the Hadis/sweepers in the northern periphery of the village, and the prolonged sound of conch-shells blown by the women of the Brahman hamlet is heard. The sweeping and washing of the shrines and residential huts of the villagers, punctuate the day's activities of the occupation-bound caste groups and other activities also, with some leisure and recreation enjoyed at intervals. Radio programmes are heard in the houses of the Brahmans, the affluent caste. From afternoon to evening the, village bustles with activities which wane with the approach of darkness. When night advances people fall deep sleep, being occasionally disturbed by howling jackals or the noisy brawls of drunken Hadis/sweepers, and beating of their drums.

The communities

Fulgeria is a multi-caste village, having altogether 9 caste and community groups. Table 1 gives the particulars of the population.

TABLE 1
Population

S. N. (1)	Caste/commu- nity (2)	No. of family (3)	Male (4)	Female (5)	Total (6)
1	Brahman	14	35	35	70
2	Malakar/florist	3	8	7	15
3	Napit/barber	2	6	3	9
4	Tanti/weaver	8	29	22	51
5	Jugi (Nath Sect)	1	3	5	8
6	Dhopa/washerman	3	5	5	10
7	Manjhi/fisherman	15	30	33	63
8	Hadi/sweeper	5	11	14	25
9	Munda (tribe)	1	2	5	7
	Total :	52	129	129	258

It has been noted that the village has got three sharply distinguished hamlets namely, (1) *Brahman hamlet* which is located in the centre of the village, (2) the *Sudra hamlet* which lies as the southern extremity of the village, where the Sudras, i.e. the Malakar/florist, the Napit/barber, the Manjhi/fisherman and the Jugi/Nath families live clustered together, and (3) the *untouchable* Hadi/sweeper families living in the northern extremity, at the outskirts of the village. The Tanti/weaver families live very close to the Brahmans. One Munda family lives in the western side of the village and a few Munda villages lie very near to this village.

Caste is peculiar in its nature. It is an endogamous social unit, the membership of which is determined by birth. Caste-groups are generally associated with certain occupational patterns having commensal and connubial restrictions. In the social hierarchy, the Brahman is placed at the top, whereas the untouchables are at the bottom. Traditional 'Varna' is the bigger aggregate of the caste groups, which has given the Brahmans the status of priests, scholars, or ministers; the Kshatriya that of warriors, the Vaishyas that of traders, (They are regarded as 'Dwijā' or 'twice-born', due to the formal initiation of *Upanayan*). The fourth category is the Sudra, designated as servants of the abovementioned three Varnas. The fifth group are the untouchables assigned to serve these groups and meant for doing unclean jobs.

According to some of these people the tribals or aboriginals are outside their social organisation, because the tribal groups have very little to do with the existing Hindu social order. 'Jati' which is more or less, equivalent to caste, is sometimes grouped or divided into 'Sreni' or sub-caste, these sub-castes are also, more or less, endogamous in nature. The *Jatis* or castes have some sort of a status-alignment. This is determined by their ritual purity, the taking of food or water by the Brahmans from the lower castes, etc. and this is reflected in the systematised occupation patterns. These are all projected into the all-India Varna

System, i.e. with the existing pattern of our society at large.

The caste-groups of Fulgeria have a setting of traditional, as well as, regional social system similar to that of caste groups all over the country.

The Brahmans, all of Utkal or Orissan origin, and termed in the locality as Oriya or Utkal group, have mostly surnames like Mahapatra, Mishra and the like. It is reported that the ancestors of these Brahmans were brought about 300 years ago for performance of rites by the Sadgop Zemindar of Narayangarh. The ancestor of the Sadgop zemindar of Narayangarh had his residence in Burdwan, and when he went on a pilgrimage to Puri on foot, he halted at the shrine of Goddess Brahmani on the way, and at last, as per the will of the Goddess communicated to him in dream, he annexed this vast region from the King of Puri.

Whatever be the actual facts, the Utkal Brahmans migrated to this region during the rule of the Hindu King of Orissa, when this tract was part and parcel of the Orissan Kingdom. The Brahmans of this village were in possession of the largest area of local land in neighbouring villages, also though they never perform any agricultural operation, and never do any manual work.

Malakar/Florist

According to the hierarchical order, next come the Malakars/florists who belong to the clean-Sudra or the *Nabasak* group, from whose hands water is generally taken by the Brahmans. The traditional occupations of the Malakar/florist are to prepare garlands, and wedding crowns from *Sola* (*Hedysrum lagenarium*). Images are adorned with these products prior to worship or ceremony. The Malakars/florists have two sub-groups, i.e. Fulpata-Mali, and Dokne Mali, which have different professions, and the Fulgeria florists belong to the Fulpata Mali sub-group. They do not plough land.

Napit/barber

They are a functional group and have about sixteen sub-groups separated according to territorial distribution and distinctions. They belong to the clean Sudra caste and assist the Brahmans in many ritual actual activities. As a result, they have, like the Brahmans, unrestricted access to the shrines.

Tanti/weaver

This particular caste group has got five sections, and the weavers of Fulgeria belong to the Sibkul sub-group. They do not use starch of rice in preparing solution for stiffening thread and cloth, as is done by the Pan, Rangdhala and Sukli groups and the social position of this group is not low. They belong to the unclean Sudra caste.

Jugi/Nath

The Jugis belong to the Nath Sect, and most of them profess weaving as traditional calling, but in this locality they are seen engaged in sewing, preparation of bedding, umbrella repairing, etc. They belong to the unclean Sudra group.

Dhopa/washerman

The Dhopa/washerman traditionally belongs to the unclean Sudra group, who professes laundering, ceremonial washing and cleaning of cloth. For any ceremonial purification, the washerman is called, and is remunerated for his services.

Manjhi/fisherman

There are a few sub-groups like Dandachhatra Manjhi, Lohar Manjhi and Masaikulia Manjhi, etc. of whom, the Manjhis of this village belong to the Dandachhatra Manjhi sub-group. Traditionally, they profess fishing, as well as selling of fish. They are unclean Sudras.

Hadi/sweeper

The Hadi/sweepers are regarded as one of the untouchables castes. They work as scavengers. On ceremonial occasions

they are invited to play on drums. Besides, the women of Hadi/sweeper caste attend delivery cases, and cut the umbilical cord of the new-born baby, and bury the placenta, (or in other words, serve like a midwife). These untouchables are at the lowest rung of the casteladder.

Munda/tribe

The Mundas are one of the tribal groups, and are regarded as autochthonous or early settlers of this country. The Munda family of this particular village has migrated from the area western to this land. They are very peaceful and hard-working agriculturists.

Literacy

Literacy has been considered here to include in its coverage such persons who can read and write elementary books and subjects independently. There are a few cases, in which the individuals had read upto College standard, after passing the School Final Examination. Table 2 shows the details of caste-wise distribution of literacy.

Family size

Total number of families in this village is 52, but there is variation in respect of their composition and number of their constituent members. These families have been grouped categorically under the following order : (1) small size, having 1-3 members, (2) medium size, having 4-6 members, (3) large-size, having 7-10 members, and (4) very large-size, having 10 or more members.

The following Table 3 shows the family sizes of different castes living in this village.

Occupation

To consider occupational patterns of the people of the village, only grown-up (15 years to 60 years) male persons have been

TABLE 2
Literacy in the village (Caste-wise)

S. N.	Caste/community	Population			Literate		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1	Brabman	35	35	70	27	22	49
2	Malakar/florist	8	7	15	5	—	5
3	Napit/barber	6	3	9	4	1	5
4	Tanti/weaver	29	22	51	17	3	20
5	Jugi/Nath Sect	3	5	8	1	1	2
6	Dhopa/washerman	5	5	10	3	—	3
7	Manjhi/fisherman	30	33	63	10	2	12
8	Hadi/sweeper	11	14	25	4	1	5
9	Munda/tribe	2	5	7	—	1	1
Total :		129	129	258	71	31	102

TABLE 3
Family Size

S. N.	Caste/community	Small (1-3)	Medium (4-6)	Large (7-10)	very large (10-more)	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1	Brahman	4	6	3	1	14
2	Malakar/florist	1	1	1	—	3
3	Napit/barber	—	2	—	—	2
4	Tanti/weaver	1	5	1	1	8
5	Jugi/Nath Sect	—	—	1	—	1
6	Dhopa/washerman	2	1	—	—	3
7	Manjhi/fisherman	6	8	1	—	15
8	Hadi/sweeper	—	4	1	—	5
9	Munda/tribe	—	—	1	—	1
Total :		14	27	9	2	52
Percentage :		26.9	51.9	17.3	3.9	100

considered, leaving aside the females who, in most cases, do only domestic work and sometimes help the male members in other economic pursuits. As in most other villages in the locality, the majority of the people here pursue their respective caste-bound occupations, sometimes as primary and sometimes as secondary means of livelihood, supplemented by other avocational facilities, available in the locality. It has been

observed that most of the villagers have land of their own by different sizes and title/right ; and they cultivate these lands either themselves, or by employing domestic servants or agricultural labour, whom they pay in cash or in kind. The land-holding communities having superior social and ritual status do not perform any work connected with agriculture, and often give lands on lease-contract to others for purposes of cultivation as share-croppers.

Some of the villagers depend either primarily or secondarily, on their traditional caste-bound occupational sources, but pursue other gainful occupations, as well. There is also a significant trend towards the shifting of traditional occupations, either by accepting service or by pursuing the caste-bound occupations of other superior or inferior castes. The occupation patterns of the village have been categorised in the following Table 4.

Table 4 reveals that altogether twelve types of occupational patterns are followed by the villagers, of whom, almost all the caste groups, more or less, follow their traditional occupations, except the Manjhi caste, who do not pursue their customary profession. But it is a fact that all the families of the different caste groups do not stick to their caste-bound occupational patterns : a shifting trend in occupations is now very pronounced among them. To cite example, one person of the weaver caste and another from the washerman caste have taken up carpentry as their main or primary occupation, due to shortage of such labour and its continuous high demand in the locality.

Like many other villages of Bengal, Fulgeria, the village under study, is mainly agriculturebased, and almost all the castes and communities here possess some land of their own. Table 5 gives the details of land-holding in this village. Only such lands have been included as are possessed by the villagers in the village or outside. Most of the cultivable lands located in the village are possessed by the other castes living in the surrounding villages. Lands cultivated on share cropping basis, though these are temporarily possessed by

TABLE 4
Occupation Patterns

S. N.	Caste	No. of family	Traditional occupation	Occupation followed Primary/Secondary
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1	Brahman	14	Priesthood, scholar, cooking (ceremonially)	(i) Landholding (ii) Agriculture (iii) Priesthood (iv) Service
2	Malakar	3	Preparation of garland and ceremonial decoration	(v) Garland preparation and ceremonial decoration, Agriculture
3	Napit	2	Hair-cutting	(vi) Hair-cutting, Agriculture, Service, Agriculture
4	Tanti	8	Weaving	(vii) Weaving (viii) Carpentry
5	Jugi	1	Preparation of bedding and umbrella repairing and weaving	(ix) Umbrella repairing
6	Dhopa	3	Washing and laundering	(x) Washing, laundering
7	Manjhi	15	Fishing and selling of fish	(xi) Agricultural labour Agriculture Agricultural labour.
8	Hadi	5	Sweeping and drummer (midwifery—only the women do this)	(xii) Sweeping and playing on drums Agriculture labour
9	Munda tribe	1	Agriculture	Agriculture
Total:		52		12

the villagers or the *Khas* lands of the village temporarily leased to the villagers, have been omitted from the table.

TABLE 5
Land Distribution in Acre (Caste-Wise)

S. N.	Caste/community	No. of family	Population	Land possessed (in acre)	Percentage
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1	Brahman	14	70	117.30	80.8
2	Malakar/florist	3	15	9.00	6.1
3	Napit/barber	2	9	3.67	2.4
4	Tanti/weaver	8	52	7.00	4.9
5	Jugi/Nath Sect	1	8	0.33	0.22
6	Dhopa/washerman	3	10	0.16	0.11
7	Manjhi/fisherman	15	63	4.16	2.9
8	Hadi/sweeper	5	24	3.00	2.07
9	Munda/tribe	1	7	0.67	0.47
Total:		52	258	145.29	100

It is evident from Table 5 that about 80.8% of the total land is possessed by 14 Brahman families only. The Dhopa/washerman caste having 3 families, possess only 0.11% land. Agriculture in this village is mainly dependent on natural rain, though there is a small canal for supplying irrigation water from the Kasai river. The type of land and better manuring largely influence the agricultural output, which is mainly paddy (one crop) in this locality. Though a few persons have in addition, kitchen gardens, get some seasonal vegetable products, yet these are less profitable. Brahmans of this village are a land holding community but they do not participate in manual labour in connection with agriculture, and as such, almost all their lands are cultivated either by employing agricultural labour, or on share-cropping basis, in which case, the owner usually gets 50% of the total yields. The Malakar/florist families also do not plough their fields or participate in agricultural operations with a view to keeping their sectarian purity and status intact. They consider it as an inferior type of work and as something derogatory to their rank in the regional social structure. Others regularly participate in agricultural activities. Most of the local agricultural labourers belong to these caste groups.

(i) Land-holding implies legal possession of land by an individual or a group, as owner, and this land is often leased out to share-croppers and cultivated by them, the owners investing nothing for such cultivation. Caste and creed do not usually stand in the way of making such an agreement possible. Of course, a good, industrious and honest cultivator is selected prior to disposal of the land for share-cropping. The owner can avoid undesirable disputes and disturbing circumstances by selecting a good cultivator. The owner of the land has to pay the annual land revenue in due time to Government. Sometimes he advances paddy loan to the share-cropper, which he pays back with an interest of 25% of paddy at present, (previously it was 50% or more) after the harvest. Due to enforcement of the Bengal Tenancy Act, it is very difficult for the owner now to uproot a share-cropper from the land which is in his possession, for cultivation. But

a clever landlord usually fixes up verbally a term of tenancy only for a year, which may be terminated, if he so desired, by charging the cultivator with wilful negligence and causing thereby deliberate loss to owner, against which no appeal or argument is entertained. In case there is better yield, the owners sometimes accept lesser interest from the share-croppers.

(ii) For agriculture, both transplanting and sowing are practised by the villagers. In the former type, the land is ploughed for the first time after the commencement of monsoon, which is followed by a number of successive instances of ploughing. Then, a nursery bed for paddy seedlings is prepared elsewhere according to the convenience of the cultivator, for transplantation. The first transplantation is done when the field is submerged in kneedeep water, with the observance of a local ceremony by the villagers, popularly known as *Janthel* (in which the Brahmans worship the deity). Paddy seeds are then sown broadcast and allowed to grow for sometime, nourished by the natural rain-water. After the *Janthel* Festival, the first furrowing is done on these fields and weeding is done at regular intervals. A good many rituals (Bhowmick : 1963) are performed, to get a bumper yield, which are sometimes conducted by the head of the family with the assistance of a Brahman priest or by the villagers themselves. There are other craft-services linked with agriculture, i. e. one has to purchase bullocks from the Muslim traders, or get his plough and other agricultural implements made by the local carpenters and blacksmiths. Cultivators, as a matter of convention, consult an astrologer or a Brahman to determine an auspicious day for the first ploughing or for first transplantation or other minor rituals. They have to depend traditionally on money lenders or the local Zemindars for obtaining cash loans but are doing so now from the Block Development Office, which gives them agricultural loan, as well as, good seeds, manure and technical guidance through village-level workers. In some cases they obtain cash loans from the local Co-operative Credit Societies.

To keep the land in his possession, a man must regularly pay

the revenue due to Government, through the village *Tahasildar* or Rent Collector. For manual labour, the cultivator has to depend on the agricultural labourers of the locality. During the cultivation period fields have to be guarded against inroads of animals or the local thieves and when the crops are ripe these are very carefully harvested and staked. Threshing is done subsequently, and chaffs are removed by blowing fans. The grains are then stored in circular straw containers or in the grain-house, as the case may be.

Bumper crops or successful agricultural operations bring happiness and smile to the cultivating class; and these are usually followed by innumerable festivities and wedding contracts are celebrated in the village. These attract the traders of different castes from outside, who come to purchase the bulk of these grains.

(iii) Priest-hood is the customary occupation of the Brahmans, of whom 8 persons here depend on it as a secondary source of livelihood only 1 person depends solely on this profession. This requires patronisation by a good number of paying clientele, in or outside the village. Of course, they should be from the Clean Sudra group, from whom water is acceptable by the Brahmans. A priest of repute must have a good many qualifications and attributes like—good physical features, scholastic activities and a through knowledge of Sanskrit religious books and philosophy, and mastery over rituals and worships. He must observe all the sacred *Days* and *Bratas*, and regular fasts according to the dictum of the sacred almanac; and he must abstain from taking any non-vegetarian diet. He must use very simple dress, usually consisting of only two pieces of cloth. He has to wear the sacred thread which should be kept very clean and an unsewn upper garment, sometimes printed all over with the name of Lord Hari—the creator of all. He must possess a *Salgram Shila* or a circular stone-image of Lord Hari or Vishnu, occasionally besmeared with sandal paste, or leaves of the sacred basil. He must have a few other implements for performance of worships and rituals like, *Kosha Kushi* or a cup-shaped water vessel for oblation or offering of liquid

drinks or purified water and a bell for ringing at the time of worship. He must possess also a few books for guidance in priest-craft. These are the minimum requirements of a priest. He must also be popular for gentle behaviour with his clientele who occasionally come to consult him on religious matters.

For his service, he is remunerated in cash and kind, containing varieties of raw vegetables, and uncooked sun-dried rice, called *Sidha*, and other offerings like fruits, sweets, etc. His remuneration or fees also include a compulsory salutation fee or *Pranami*, which is paid by the devotees to the deity, after salutation, as well as to the priest, on the occasion. Most of them refrain from smoking and taking non-vegetarian meals. Most of them also rise early in the morning, for offering prayers to their Family Deities by quoting verses from the Religious Books, or for offering oblation to them. They have to worship or propitiate the Family Deities regularly, at a fixed time of the day. When they receive any call from their clients they go to their places, and perform the worships and rituals according to the accepted norms. The clientele of these Brahmins generally belong to the clean Sudra groups, from whose hands, water and uncooked food are considered acceptable.

(iv) Service here means employment in Government, Semi-Government or private agencies. This requires a specific qualification, and only when a person has got such a qualification and is found otherwise suitable, he is offered an employment. This is a new avocational trend in this locality. It has been found that 5 Brahmins are already employed, 3 of whom working as school teachers and 1 as Tax Collector, and another is a Railway employee. One Tanti/weaver caste member was found to have been employed as a Postman of the village Post Office since its inception. From such service, the employees concerned get cash money according to the nature of their jobs.

(v) Garland-making and ceremonial decoration of the wedding booth, or the place of worship, are the traditional caste-bound occupation of the Malakar/florist. It has been found that out of 3 such families, 2 depend secondarily on this tradi-

tional occupation. These families mainly depend on agriculture. Their traditional occupation, at present, is not at all lucrative, because they are seldom asked for by the villagers to do such decorative work.

(vi) Hair-cutting and pairing off nails prior to ceremonial purification is the traditional occupation of the Napit/barber. Generally they have a few fixed clientele of various castes, mainly the Brahmans, and the pure Sudra groups well as, similar castes of the neighbouring villages, and for their service they are remunerated by payment of a fixed quantity of paddy once annually. Besides, when they attend the ceremonies in connection with child-birth, wedding, death, etc., or assist the priest in celebrations and propitiations, they are paid, both in cash and in kind.

Two Napits/barbers depend primarily on their traditional profession. They also attend the local market for cutting hair which they do against cash payment. It is significant that in the market, they do not show any preference for any specific caste as client. This performance, however, is strictly observed in the village.

(vii) Weaving is the traditional occupation of the Tantis/weavers of this village. A few years ago, these weaver families came here from elsewhere to settle. Out of 8 weaver families of the village, 1 family depends on the traditional profession of weaving secondarily, 1 depends on carpentry and a third on Government Service primarily. The rest of the families depend on agriculture or work as agricultural labour. The traditional weaver has got one pit-loom, and prepares a few varieties of coarse cloths like, napkin, etc. This is however not at all lucrative as a profession.

(viii) Carpentry is the traditional occupation of the Chhutar/carpenter caste of Bengal. But in this locality, as there is no such traditional caste group, a good number of people belonging to other castes have shifted to this type of occupation. Two persons, one of them belonging to the Tanti/weaver caste, have chosen this profession, as their primary occupation, the other is a Dhopa/washerman, pursuing this trade as his primary

occupation. This type of shifting in the occupation pattern does not provoke any adverse criticism in the locality now, or is not considered derogatory to caste status.

It is important to note here that one Brahman youngman of this locality does occasionally carpentry-work in his own house. He, however, never goes to work outside his own home.

(ix) Umbrella repairing and preparation of bedding and weaving are the traditional occupation of the Jugi Caste/Nath Sect of the village, and its members mainly depend on this traditional work. Casually they work as agricultural labour also.

(x) Washing or laundering is the traditional occupation of the Dhopa/washerman caste. This profession is not at all paying at present, as the villagers have started using washing soap and soda to wash their own cloth. Their services are called only when a baby is born in a family, or during a marriage ceremony or when somebody dies. For ceremonial purification, a washerman is necessary; and for this service he is paid in cash or in kind. The payment is more or less fixed in the locality. Out of 3 such families, 2 depend on their traditional occupation but not as a primary source of income. One family depends on carpentry, whereas 2 other depend on agricultural labour.

(xi) Agricultural labour is a major source of employment to the landless poor people of the locality. They comprise various castes and creeds and when they find any opportunity for such employment, they work either for cash or for kind, or for both. Generally, efficient, honest, and hard-working labourers are selected by the employers. Sometimes, these agricultural labourers are supplied with breakfast or heavy morning tiffin and also with midday meal. Their services are in great demand during the agricultural season.

(xii) Sweeping and playing on drums are the traditional occupations of the Hadi/sweeper caste. There are altogether 5 families of Hadi/sweeper in this village. Out of these families, 4 persons mainly depend on agriculture/agricultural labour. Two Hadi women of this village generally attend delivery cases as midwife to cut the umbilical cord and remove the placenta of the new-born baby. Almost all the male persons of this

commuunity work as drummers during festive occasions in the locality, for which they are paid a fixed remuneration in cash.

Economic position

Total income of the different caste groups of Fulgeria has been determined considering all the sources of income of all earning members. Table 6 shows the *per capita* annual income in each caste group, on the average, which determines the approximate economic status of the different caste groups, in relation to each other. This economic position with social status and numerical strength of the various caste groups determines their political status and position in village life.

It will be evident from Table 6 that the Brahmans enjoy a better economic position. They possess most of the land in the village (80%). Educationally also they are more advanced than the other castes and communities. Though the Manjhi/fisherman

TABLE 6
Income (Per Capita) of Caste Groups
(As per Investigations in the year)

S. N.	Caste	Population	Annual income in rupees
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1	Brahman	70	451.62
2	Malakar	15	199.33
3	Napit	9	247.94
4	Tanti	52	133.25
5	Jugi	8	85.58
6	Dhopa	10	88.47
7	Manjhi	63	47.41
8	Hadi	24	154.07
9	Munda	7	105.54
	Total :	258	—

caste has a population strength by 68, they possess only 2.9% of the cultivable land of the village, and has a per capita income of Rs. 47.41 per annum. Though the Napit/barber is numerically very insignificant, (a total population of 9 heads only) possessing 2.4% of land, yet they are in a better economic condition, having a per capita income of Rs. 247.94 per annum.

This indirectly shows the better employment facilities enjoyed by them throughout the year in the locality, and their income does not depend on fluctuations of agricultural output,

Thus, it becomes clear that ownership of land in the village implies better economic condition and status, and consequently, people owning land gain a command over the services of others in the village. From Table 6 it can be said that the Brahmans are economically on the top of the social ladder, and next to them come successively the Napit/barber, the Malakar/florist, the Hadi/sweeper, the Tanti/weaver, the Munda/tribe, the Dhopa/washerman, the Jugi/Nath Sect and the Manjhi/fisherman.

Ritual purity and social hierarchy

It has been stated earlier that the castes or community groups of Fulgeria have certain conventional forms of mutual understanding, in respect of their social status, which are more or less, manifested in their behaviour patterns and in their observance of ritual purity. The higher the caste status, the lesser are the social disabilities; and, as such, the lower caste groups have to experience many disadvantages. They are debarred from observing most of the Hindu rituals, violation of which, according to Hindu doctrine, would spell disaster in their worldly life, and after rebirth also. These ideas have been so skillfully propagated and applied over years that these have vastly influenced their activities in day-to-day life. And, it is very difficult for an individual so obsessed, to violate such faith or to act against such norms. Accordingly, by virtue of their profession, the Brahmans are on the top of the social hierarchy and enjoy many advantages over others, in the local rural society. To maintain their superior status, they have to follow rigid rules and restrictions fixed up by convention. They are the only persons who are believed to be able to establish communion with the gods and goddesses.

These restrictions are observed not only in regard to commensal or connubial matters, but also in respect of participation in a good many rituals. The Brahmans have to follow quite a

number of *Sanskaras* or purification rituals, whereas the Sudras have to observe only a few. These purificatory rituals are spread through the whole span of life of an individual, and are observed on varied occasions, which are considered important in the normal life cycle. They begin with the foetus laying celebration or *Garbhadhān* and end with the last offering of *Sradh* or *Antyesti* to the departed soul. These rituals deeply influence the activities of an individual, and he believes that these directly determine his destiny in this world and also in the other world after his death. Besides, there are a few rituals which are performed by the individual when a traditional social norm is violated. These are considered to be impregnated with certain values prevailing still in the society, and these values are propagated, from time to time, by the great religious preceptors to control and regulate the society in a proper manner.

The Brahmins of Fulgeria perform, more or less, all the rituals. A Brahmin can take uncooked food from the house of an individual of the clean Sudra group (Malakar/florist, Napit/barber, Tanti/weaver) of this village. These food articles are then cooked by his client, who then offers remuneration (*Pranami*) to him.

The clean Sudra castes, though they have various traditionally authorised clean occupations, are recognised to belong to a broad social alignment with other caste groups. As a result, these caste members can sit together in the same row with the higher castes, and take food in a social feast; they need not remove their dining plates after eating. The unclean Sudras of this village, on the other hand, have to sit in a separate row in a social dinner, and have to remove their dining plates, after the feast. The unclean Sudras of this village consist of Jugi/Nath Sect, Dhopa/washerman and Manjhi/fisherman caste. They do not get the services of the Brahmin priests in their social functions and religious festivals, but, in some cases, a few degraded Brahmins act as their priests, whose status is considered much lower than that of the pure

Brahmans. The Hadi/sweepers are an untouchable caste, who mostly perform unclean jobs. They are not permitted to have the assistance of the Brahmans, or the Dhopa/washerman or the Napit/barber, for the performance of any ritual or any ceremony intended for purification. The Munda/tribals are outside such caste rules.

Nine important events or occasions have got a few minor phases or features, which are generally observed by the caste groups of this locality. These rituals are associated with certain types of purificatory values, according to Hindu doctrine and are strictly observed by the caste groups.

A detailed analysis of the ritual aspects of this village reveals that these nine major events or occasions are distributed in a manner which covers the entire life cycle of an individual, and an individual has normally to observe them from time to time. It has been recorded that these nine major rituals are (i) *Garbhadhan*, i. e. foetus laying or first conception having altogether 4 prescribed rituals and 8 phases or points, (ii) *Sadbhakan*, i. e. ceremonial feeding of the pregnant woman, which has 1 ritual with 2 phases or points, (iii) *Janakarma*, i. e. after-birth ceremony, having 2 rituals with 4 phases or points, (iv) *Namadeya*, i. e. name giving ceremony, which has 3 rituals with 6 phases or points, (v) *Niskraman*, i. e. purificatory ceremony after birth, which has 2 rituals with 4 phases or points, (vi) *Anna-prasan*, i. e. ceremonial first ricefeeding, having 1 ritual with 2 phases or points, (vii) *Upanayan*, i. e. wearing of the sacred thread, having 3 rituals with 6 phases or points, (viii) *Bibaha*, i. e. marriage, having 31 rituals and 62 phases of observance, (ix) *Antyesthi* or mortuary rituals, having 30 different rituals, with 60 phases.

Table 7 gives the details of participation by caste groups of this village, different rituals, which indicate the relative ritual status of a caste group in the existing social structure. This will reflect again that the Brahmans are on the top.

Power dynamics and conflicts

The castes and communities of Fulgeria are clustered in such a way in a small area that it promotes caste-alignment and

TABLE 7
Participation in Rituals by the Caste Groups

Major Samskaras	Rituals	Caste groups						
		Brahman	Malakar	Napit	Tanti	Jugi	Dhopa	Majhi Hadi
(1)	(2)	(3)						
1	Garbhadhana	(i) Purificatory bath	2	2	2	2	2	2
		(ii) 'Jamai Puja'	2	2	2	2	2	2
		(iii) 'Chediraj Puja'	2	2	2	2	2	2
		(iv) Ancestor worship	2	2	2	2	2	2
2	Sadbhakohan	(i) Sadbhakohan	2	2	2	2	1	1
3	Jatakarma	(i) Sajalatta	2	2	2	2	1	—
		(ii) Cleansing of the house and cooking utensils	2	1	1	1	1	—
4	Namadeya	(i) Purificatory bath	2	—	—	—	—	—
		(ii) Worship of goddess Sasthi	2	2	2	2	1	1
		(iii) Ritual selection of the name for the child	2	—	—	—	—	—
5	Niskramana	(i) Nabalatta	2	—	—	1	1	—
		(ii) Ekusha	2	2	2	2	2	1
6	Annaprasan	(i) Worship of God Satyanarayan	2	2	2	1	1	1
7	Upanayan	(i) Homas	2	—	—	—	—	—
		(ii) Wearing the Sacred thread	2	—	—	1	—	—
		(iii) Confinement in a room	2	—	—	—	—	—
8	Bibaha	31 different rituals have been considered	62	47	44	45	47	44
9	Antyasthi	30 different rituals have been considered	60	49	49	49	47	40
	Total :	77 rituals	154	115	112	114	109	82

generates group factions also due to their spatial closeness. This village has a clear-cut Brahman hamlet, inhabited by the Brahmins. The Sudra hamlet is in close proximity, with the Mhlakar/florist, Napit/barber, Jugi/Nath, Dhopa/washerman, Manjhi/fisherman, (the Tanti/weavers, were living alongside the Brahman hamlet, due to their recent migration to this village and the availability of land in that area). The Hari/sweepers' hamlet is in northern outskirts.

In respect of population size, the Brahmins are dominating (they are formed by 70 individuals), and, at the same time, they are in the topmost position of the social hierarchy—a position which is unquestionable. They are quite honoured by others, and possess the maximum acres of land (80%) of the village. Thus in all respects, the Brahmins are the dominating caste. Automatically they are in a position to exercise their power in all social affairs.

There are other contributory reasons too. For instance, a few among them hold Government Service (they are school teachers, railway employees and Village Revenue Collectors) and these assignments have assured them a better social and economic position. Educationally also, they are more advanced than other caste groups. These factors together have assisted the Brahmins to assume a distinctive position. Naturally, they are strongly equipped to guide village affairs for years together. Late Haripada Mishra and old Jharieswar Mahapatra controlled village affairs like annual worships and celebrations of the village gods and goddesses, settlement of inter-familial and intra-village disputes, and a variety of other important public activities, for a pretty long time. They had to give their verdict on various issues of conflict arising in the normal functioning of village society. Even, they used to inflict physical punishment on the offenders, of whom Bhuban Bera, a Manjhi/fisherman caste was one, who was given 25 strokes of shoe as he eloped with a woman of the village, about 25 years ago. The village, at that time, was controlled with strict discipline by late Haripada Mishra and Jharieswar Mahapatra. Even the people of other castes respected them, and they continued to maintain their high

status in the village. They had good relationship with the Officer-in-Charge of the police Station. Thus, the village administration was de facto in the hands of the Brahmans and was well run by them.

But, this sort of concentration of power did not go unchallenged. The non-Brahmans or Sudras, led by Sri Akhil Malakar, a Malakar/florist by caste was in the vanguard of such challenge. One ambitious young Brahman named S. P. who came to settle in this village, inheriting his father-in-law's property (a resident son-in-law) engendered the test caste of such challenge. As rumour goes, he was a person of licentious character and was connected with many ugly incidents in the village. S. P. tried to depose the then village elders, like Haripada Mishra and Jhareswar Mahapatra, by provoking the Sudras against them for their so-called autocracy. Gradually, the Sudras formed an opposing group, and the village was divided into two clear power blocs. Subsequently, the lands of the Brahmans, which were so long given to the Sudras, were taken back from them. (Thus, they were deprived of their right, which was so long enjoyed by them, for a few generations). Now these lands were given to the new emigrants of the Tanti/weaver caste, who showed loyalty to them; they were received very warmly by the Brahman landlords. The Tanti/weaver caste, but for their economic interest, could not thus merge with the Sudra power bloc in the village, though they belonged to the Sudra group.

At the same time, the Tanti/weaver caste lived in close proximity with the Brahmans which stopped their close contact with the other Sudras. The land-holding Brahmans had a good many lapses and faults. So they did not allow S. P. (Brahman by caste) to stand against them through the Sudra group. On the other hand, the Brahmans made a hasty compromise with S. P. and accepted his leadership in the affairs of the village. S. P., after securing this position in the village, tried to unite the Sudras of the whole village, who are an oppressed community, with an intention to exercise the conventional supremacy of a headman and demanded the tradition-bound loyalty of the people.

The Sudras, at that time, lost their economic interest in working with the Brahmins, as the latter took their lands back from them. So they flatly refused the proposal of S. P., now in the Brahmin power bloc. New leadership was found in Akhil Malakar, a florist by caste who set the Sudra power bloc against the Brahmins. As a result, constant rivalry in the form of factional outbursts, flared up in the village (involving even trifles). This continued and prolonged for certain time. And gradually, India having won independence, the political structure of the country had changed. This brought about a change in the outlook of the local communities and the non-Brahmin Sudras affiliated themselves with different political parties of the area. Occasionally from now they began receiving instruction on social and economic issues from them.

Due to the introduction of democratic principles by new constitutional sanctions in India, these people got some protection of the zemindary system (land-holding) and gave the Sudras some economic benefit. Very recently, the Gram Sabha election took place (about 3 years ago) and the Brahmins captured tactfully all the three seats, with the help of the weavers. They kept the Tanti weavers totally segregated from the Sudras, threatening them to dispossess them of their lands, if they would vote against them. The weavers also did not venture in incurring displeasures of the Brahmins landlords, as they are cultivating their lands without any difficulty amidst many competitive claims.

At present, the following persons are the officials of the village Gram Sabha :

- A. Mahapatra (Brahmin), Adhyakshya, Gram Sabha.
- A. Mishra (Brahmin), Member and representative to the Anchal Panchayat.
- S. Pahari (Brahmin), Member, Gram Sabha.

The cases described below, will show the affairs of the village, its factions, in which conflict and compromise have been rotating alternatively during all these years.

It was a common custom in the village that all the families should be invited on the occasion of a marriage or in the

ceremonial feasts, after the performance of the purificatory rite after death. But there were a few sharp deviations from this tradition, due to group rivalry. There were a few wedding celebrations in the houses of the Brahmans, when all the Sudras, excepting the Tanti/weavers, were denied the custom of formal invitation, which is a privilege of their caste-status. These events wounded the sentiment of the Sudras seriously and they began considering not to co-operate with the Brahmans in the annual village worships in future. But a temporary compromise was made prior to the annual *Sitala* worship, as nobody ventured to incite the wrath of the Goddess by suspending her worship. Eventually the Sudras paid their regular subscriptions to the Brahman elders, which they were customarily doing so far. On the day of worship, when a feast and distribution of *Prasad*, (i.e. consecrated food material offered to the deity) were arranged, and the distribution of the dedicated offerings was started to the Sudras, they respectfully partook of it, but refused to remove the plates after the feast, which action was against the custom. They now claimed a better social status, due to change in the socio-political condition of the country. But the Brahman requested them, again and again, to observe the custom, and told them that their grievances would be given consideration next time.

In the same year (1963), Saktipada pahari, a Brahman, was the Secretary of the Celebration Committee, along with two other Brahmans. They collected an amount totalling more than Rs. 500/-, but did not produce any account of the expenditure to the Sudras, and they insulted them seriously when the latter demanded a look into this matter. This aggravated the already strained relations and ultimately the Sudras resorted to the measure of non-co-operation with the Brahmans. In that year, a wedding ceremony took place at the house of Akhil Malakar, a Malakar/florist by caste. Conventionally, the Brahmans were to be invited and given as per custom, a presentation of 10 betelnuts, registering a mark of honour and loyalty. The Brahmans, being afraid of losing their traditional social position (as they had previously ill-treated the Sudras and anticipated reciprocal behaviour) attempted to make a compromise with

the Malakar/florist and requested him to invite them. Akhil, in consultation with the other Sudras, agreed to invite the Brahmans paid their ceremonial visit to Akhil's house and to their utter surprise, instead of being duly received and honoured, they were scolded and insulted by him on the spot. Rough words were exchanged by both the sides, and the Brahmans, having no other alternative, hastily left the place to keep self prestige and social honour.

The Brahmans took the matter very seriously, but had very little opportunity of taking a fit revenge. Next year (1964), prior to the celebration of the annual Sitla worship, the two communities did not make any compromise, as before. Consequently, two separate worships of the village deity were held. The Sudras brought a Brahman priest from a neighbouring village to perform the rituals. Such an arrangement wounded heavily the feelings of the Brahman leaders of this village, who now lost their traditional clientele. As a result, the Brahmans became furious. In the same year, a death purification ceremony took place at the house of Giris Bisui, a Tanti/weaver by caste in which the Brahmans of the village participated and directed the weavers not to invite the Sudras. They complied, and, their alliance was now reinforced against the Sudras.

In 1965, a few young men of the village tried to effect a compromise between the two communities, prior to the annual worship of the village deity. It was settled that Narayan Mali, belonging to the Malakar/florist caste would be selected as the Secretary of the Celebration Committee, and that he would manage the whole affair. The Brahmans in spite of their apathy to such a proposal, accepted the arrangement and paid their subscriptions to him. He raised a fund of Rs. 250/- approximately and after having met all the costs, showed an excess of Rs. 40/-. Narayan Mali kept the amount of Rs. 40/- with him and refused to hand it over to the priest of the temple. Rather, he demanded an examination of the details of the expenditure incurred by Sri S. Pahari in the previous year, when Rs. 500/- were raised as subscription.

Observations

It has been discussed in the foregoing pages that village Fulgeria has agriculture as its main economy and that the caste groups, living in it, are directly dependent on agriculture. The tradition-bound caste occupations have shifted to a little extent, and the agriculture condition has not yet improved, though a few facilities like tenancy right and cash or crop loan, etc. are now made available to the villagers during the post-independence era. The Brahmans are a land-holding caste, and they are enjoying the same benefit even now, with additional facilities of employment in Government services due to the introduction of modern education. The Brahmans originally came to settle in this tract of land, to render service in priestcraft and perform other ritual services when there was no Brahman in this area, a few decades ago. They received gifts of land from the local zemindars, and engaged the local Sudras for cultivation of these lands and also worked as priest to serve this community.

During Mohammedan hegemony and early part of British rule in this tract, their social supremacy was never challenged by any one. Rather they were accepted as leaders and guides in all matters of village life. Their supremacy in the power structure of the village has been consolidated due to three important factors namely, (i) control over land, i.e. better economic position, (ii) traditional caste and ritual privilege and status, and (iii) numerical majority of the caste (in proportion to other castes).

This status-power and economic position had bestowed on them a good many privileges, which ultimately placed them on the topmost social position, and concentrated in their hands all controlling powers. The concept of 'sin' and 'merit' emanating from Hindu sacramental ideas, rationalised these advantages (without any question or challenge or interpretation as the Brahmans enjoyed 'royal' patronage). But, this lofty position received a serious blow in the hands of the Sudras who were provoked to challenge their supremacy by a Brahman youngman; the youngman had a better economic position and

the qualities of a leader. After prolonged bitterness and conflict, a stable compromise was made with the Brahmans and still the forked-off Sudra power bloc of the village, provoked by S. P. (Brahman) did not agree to be united with the Brahman power-bloc. And factional tensions still persists in the village. This is due to (a) the Sudras have been long deprived of land benefits by the Brahmans, (b) the political movement and struggles for freedom (which dragged the people out from narrow confines and set them in contact with leaders outside the village) which threw new light on their existing ideas and sense of values, and (c) the abolition of the zemindary system, and (d) different kinds of economic assistance offered to them by the Democratic Government, made the people less dependent on the traditional village leaders (the Brahman). These people now seek advice from political parties and Government Officials (Block Development Officers) in case there is any local problem or dispute. Besides, the services of Brahmans from outside are now easily available, as a result of which the Brahmans of the village as a group, have lost caste solidarity. All this indirectly affected the loyalty of the lower caste people to the land-holding Brahman caste of this village.

The Brahmans had all along received patron-age from the local zeminders. So they had better times, and enjoyed more privileges. The non-Brahmans got into a strong-hold of power, when British rule terminated and the zemindary system was liquidated from India.

In the current election to the Panchayat, the Sudras did not have the chance to set themselves against the Brahmans, as they had no experience of the same, but it was revealed during our field investigations, that they would not be remaining aloof next time.

Thus, traditional village life with all its sociopolitical structures and economic organisations, has changed profoundly, due to changes in the political set-up of the country, and the emerging democratic privileges, in which the caste groups had to reorient their outlook under circumstantial exigencies. The village boundary has extended, socio-politically and economically,

due to greater communication facilities, and administrative reforms currently introduced. The world view and the meaning of life have also been changed to a considerable extent (this, in many cases, reacts against their traditional views). And, progressive political ideas are now getting support from the so-far neglected sections of the villagers. This sort of an interaction with the outer groups of people generates a radical outlook against the customary Brahman power structure, and this ultimately tends to dissolve the village solidarity or the intra-village relationship, in general.

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20. THE JHARKHAND MOVEMENT IN WEST BENGAL : A PRELIMINARY STUDY.¹

The Jharkhand Movement is just one of the many chapters in the history of political movements in India. The movement was initiated by the All India Jharkhand Party, which is a political organisation mainly of the tribal communities, whose aims and objects are to consolidate the Adivasis within the Constitutional framework of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of India, by formation of Jharkhand, comprising the Division of Chotanagpur, the districts of Santal Parganas, the former Chotanagpur States, namely, Chongbhakar, Jodhpur, Korea, Surjapur, Udaipur, Barma, Beni, Gangpur, Keonjhar, the district of Purulia and some portions of Midnapur and Bankura districts of West Bengal, and other adjacent territories. This movement was first started in Bihar as early as in 1945 at the initiative of late Joypal Singh, an educated Christian Munda, who, at that time, was a Member of the Parliament.

Prior to that, there was Chotanagpur Adivasi Mahasabha (1939) whose origin dates back to the Chotanagpur Unnati Samiti (Society for the uplift of Chotanagpur). In its historical process of growth and development and the changing of leadership from rural-bred charismatic to highly educated Christian leaders, and again to tribal non-Christian leaders, the Jharkhand movement is very significant. One will find, how through philanthropic approaches to improve the living conditions of the down-trodden, the educated tribal Christian students took initiative, and later how non-tribal ethnic elements living in Choto-nagpur region have been incorporated

¹ Presented in the seminar on 'on going movements', held in the Anthropological Survey of India, 1976

in one of its organisational phases for the improvement of the social, political and economic conditions of the people of Chotonagpur, in general, and the tribals in particular. Thus in the beginning of 1939, the Chotonagpur Adivasi Mahasabha picked up Mr. Joypal Singh, who was at that time a Minister in the Bikaner State. Mr. Singh took keen interest to activate the movement of the Chotonagpurias, for their overall development. He became its president and in course of time, he was able to bring certain changes in the constitution of the Mahasabha itself by incorporating non-Adivasi members and later on, forming the party as 'Jharkhand Party'. Then it became a fledged political party.

The ideals of the party attracted the tribals, in general, and gradually the waves of Jharkhand movement touched the shore of West Bengal and a local unit was formed, which began to function as a State unit since August 1965. Based on the idea of ameliorating the conditions of the tribal people, they mobilised and electrified the tribal folks, and demanded the rights and privileges for the hitherto down-trodden tribal people. Resurgence of tribal culture and realisation of their socio-economic aspirations, along with the establishment of a separate State, became the vocal theme of the movement.

West Bengal, homeland of a large number of tribal people, felt the impact of this tribal regeneration movement—a movement basically led by the tribal people themselves. In the post-independence period, India's democratic secular constitution provided a fillip and special privileges to the backward classes for all-out development, and with introduction of adult suffrage, the tribals became particularly sensitive about their rights and aspirations and their cultural distinctiveness. The Jharkhand Movement is a part of such psychology of tribal assertion, in which ethnocentric ideas of the tribals have mingled.

Table I shows the details of tribal concentration in West Bengal with special reference to Burdwan Division, which

is co-terminous with the Chotanagpur region (proposed Jharkhand State) in its geophysical setting. At the same time, a good number of tribal communities live in this vast area spread in rising waves to the different corners of this region through the tribals who cut across the political State boundaries to enlighten their compereers elsewhere.

TABLE 1
Tribal population of West Bengal

S. N.	West Bengal (Total)	1931	1961	1971
		11,65,337 Burdwan Division		2,532,669
	Districts			
1	Burdwan	1,34,545	1,83,143	228,605
2	Birbham	79,417	1,06,860	125,250
3	Bankura	1,38,201	1,73,389	208,735
4	Midnapur	2,12,525	3,29,736	442,963
5	Hooghly	57,243	6,111	100,084
6	Howrah	6,410	90,106	3,364
7	Purulia		2,62,858	313,793

It is clear from the above table that there is a large concentration of Tribals in this area and among them the Santals are the dominating tribal group in this state and even in adjoining States. In fact the tribal life is dominated by the Santals, specially in West Bengal. Even before independence, attempts were made to unite the tribal people, specially the people of the districts of Burdwan Division, under the tribal banner. There are a good number of traditional fairs (Mela) where the tribals from the adjoining regions gather at different times and occasions. On those occasions, the tribal people, in general, get an opportunity of meeting together in a mass. They often discuss many of their socio-economic problems in these meetings. The participants not only devote their time in many of the traditional economic transactions, but also participate in cultural activities like dancing, merry-making and drinking their exhilarating rice-beer in the traditional way. Table 2 provides some particulars of such fairs in Bengal-Bihar-Orissa border.

TABLE 2

Particulars of some fairs (Mela) held in Bengal-Bihar-Orissa

S. N.	Location	Occasion
1	Ramchandrapur Petbindha (Gopiballavpur P.S.) Midnapur	Phalguni Purnima (Feb.)
2	Khakri (Nayagram P.S.) Midnapur	Baisakh (April)
3	Phulkusma : Bankura	do
4	Kanaisar : Singhbhum : Bihar	Asarh (20th July)
5	Pitalkanthi Sankrail P.S., Midnapur	Aswin : Durgapuja (October)
6	Simlan (Kalna P.S.) Burdwan	2nd Aswin (October)
7	Diksui Bhagaddi, Hooghly	Vijaya Dasami (Oct.)
8	Khoyer Pahari, Sarenga Bankura	Sidhu Kanu day celebration : Lakshmi-puja (Oct.)
9	Dhachati (Salbani P.S.) Midnapur	Kalipuja : (Kartik) (Oct.)
10	Baramesia : (Goaltore) Midnapur	Bhatri Dwitia (Oct.)
11	Palaibazar (P.S. Rasulpur) Burdwan	do
12	Khannan (Hooghly)	Next day of. do
13	Dhapaspara (Kalna P.S.) Burdwan	Rasjatra : Kartik (Oct.-Nov.)
14	Pandua : Hooghly	2nd Magh (Jan.)
15	Hichapara : Baita Midnapur	Akhanpuja, 9th Magh (Jan.)
16	Sonagara, Singhbhum, Bihar	Makar (Jan.)

Tribal people from adjoining areas as well as from distant places attend and participate in these fairs. These have profound socio-psychological significance in the life of these people. These create enthusiasm in their mind and by establishing ceremonial or ritual kinship and other formalities, they become close together and reinforce their social relations. The participants get the scope of discussing many of their local problems and solving these by group discussion. Though the Santals are in overwhelming majority, still other tribal people do not miss such opportunities. Even non-tribals also participate in these fairs. These fairs dissolve inter-ethnic

distances, in general, though the practice of avoiding 'Diku' (non-tribal) pesters their mind.

During later half of British rule in India, the tribal communities became aware of their problems. They also realised that many of the local Zemindars or land-holding communities were exploiting the tribal communities. They did not give them any receipt, though they were recognised *Bargadars* (share-croppers). They tried to oust the tribals from their small land holding. As a matter of fact, a gathering of the tribals was held (possibly in 1928) in Saharidanga. (Binpur P. S.) in the district of Midnapur under the leadership of Mongal Saren, Nabin Soren of Kamarbandi, Badyanath Hansda (d), Dinabandhu Mandi of Saharidanga, Monasaram Mandi of Kurchibani and Doma Soran of Bansol.

It may be said that this gathering was of a different nature for the first time and it had a striking departure from traditional fairs, where the tribals used to gather from time to time. This was a sort of political meeting mainly of placing the demands of the tribal people for relief from their suffering under which they were groaning for a long time. In 1935, when the then British Government, through certain administrative reforms, wanted to have election, one Sri Nabin Soren was one of the aspirants for an Assemble seat, and was favoured by the Congress and requested to visit Midnapur for final approval of his candidature. But he was refused due to certain political reasons. This created confusion and provoked Nabin Babu to contest independently with the 'Axe' symbol. However with this sort of revitalisation the tribals of Midnapur gradually became dominant in their socio-political life. That is, the tribals were no more contented with their own fate and mode of traditional life and enjoyment through fairs and festivals. Rather they began to be conscious about their own rights and privileges. During the Second World War, the then District Magistrate of Midnapur requested a good many so-called tribal leaders to give their support in the War and thus solicited, Nabin Babu convened a meeting at Saharidanga along with others to arrange for sending some tribal young men to War. This created a little confusion and reflected the warth of Nabin

Babu against the Congress, who, at that time, declared and initiated the Freedom Movement in India, specially in Midnapur. However, the tribals, specially the Santals, took a lead to convene a meeting (1946) at Kamarbandhi (P. S. Binpur, Midnapur) and a decision to form a tribal organisation along the line of Bihar tribal movement was arrived at. Sri Nabin Soren (Santal) of Kamarbandhi became its President. The organisation was named as 'Santal Gaonta' i. e. Santal Unnayan Samity (Society for uplift of the Santals). Sri Dinabandhu Mandi (Santal) also took the leading role. They also tried to preach against their so-called pristine tribal cultures, which were considered to be more native. It can be stated here that the Santals and other tribal groups also were influenced by the dominant cultural traits of the locality. The slant was towards the universalisation of the tribal traits.

Independence freed the Jinn from the bottle. The tribals, along with other local peasants also became conscious about their rights and, as such, some of the members of the Santal Gaonta began to think of the tribal situations, more or less, on a broader political context.

In 1949 Sri Shyam Charan Murmu of Ronarani and Phagu Murmu of Kharurpal (near Belpahari) reconstituted the Santal Gaonta as 'Adivasi Mahasabha'. The concept of 'Adivasi' on this broad-based view attracted the attention of other tribals, specially the Mundas and Bhumijes, who began to take interest in the activities of this organisation. Thus Sri Abhoy Singh (Munda) of Nayagram also joined hands with these leaders and took active interest in the activities of Adivasi Mahasabha with other Santal leaders of the locality. It was decided that Adivasi Mahasabha will work as a non-political organisation. It would be a larger platform for all Adivasis to deal with their social, economic and cultural problems by constitutional means. There were annual meetings and conventions of the Mahasabha, where resolutions were adopted on various socio-economic problems. It demanded more stipends for the tribal students from the government and prevention of land alienation by non-tribals by various ruses and false litigations.

Influence of the missionaries in all these activities, specially in respect of the growth of this tribal ethnocentrism is too apparent. Four important centres were set up by them in different areas. Their active participation in tribal affairs largely helped the rapid growth of Jharkhand Movement. These centres were set up at (i) Ranchi, (ii) Benachiti (Bihar), (iii) Rairongpur (Orissa), and (iv) Bhimpur, Midnapur. It is suspected that in these four centres the converted tribals were guided by some foreign missionaries.

In 1952 general elections, there were a few tribal constituencies in Midnapur, in two of which Congress Party nominated Arjun Baske (Raipur : Nayagram) and Mangol Soren (Kamarbandhi-Binpur) as their own candidates. The other tribal candidates were also backed by other political parties, e. g. Sir Jagatpati Hansda (Santal) represented Krishak Majdur Praja (KMP) Party, Sri Ratan Soren in Nayagram constituency and Sri Birom Soren in Binpur constituency represented the Socialist Party, and Sri Shyam Charan Murmu, an independent candidate was backed by the Adivasi Mahasabha (Jharkhand) and had alliance with Jan Sangh. In 1957, the Adivasi Mahasabha backed a few tribal candidates in different constituencies to contest against Congress. They contested with 'Cock' symbol. Shyam Charan Murmu stood as a candidate for Assembly seat from Binpur, Ratan Soren from Gopiballavpur, Sarat Murmu from Jhargram and Babulal Soren from Raipur, Bankura. Sri Charu Chandra Basra was tipped for a Parliamentary seat from Jhargram. All of them contested as Independent candidates. It was reported that they were backed by the Jharkhand Party of Bihar as there was no State-level Organisation then in West Bengal. All of them were miserably defeated in the election and forfeited their security money. The Congress candidate set up in this election was also defeated by the C. P. I. candidate Sri Jamadar Hansda of Saltani.

This defeat of the Adivasi Mahasabha created a sense of frustration among the local leaders and they tried to reorganise the Mahasabha thoroughly to make it strong. The anticipated trend of 1962 general election was not in favour of independent

tribal candidates. So most of the tribals tried to form a State Unit of Jharkhand Party and tried to have its affiliation with the All India Jharkhand Party. Thus in 1965, a State level committee was constituted with 13 members (Appendix 'A'), under the leadership of Sri Dhakhin Murmu, an energetic young non-Christian Santal, who had his Post-graduate training in Agriculture from the University of Calcutta.

His utmost efforts and organising ability created enthusiasm amongst the tribals. The active members had to pay Rs. 25/- and the ordinary members Rs. 1.25 for being enrolled. At the beginning, the party had enrolled more than 7000 members.

The Jharkhand Party then geared up its political machinery and branches were opened in the districts, as well as, on sub-divisional and block levels in many parts of Midnapur, Bankura, Purulia, Hooghly, Burdwan and Birbhum in West Bengal. Thus the party toned up its activities and created an ardent zeal among the tribals in such a way, that they were able to increase the membership upto 60,000 in West Bengal alone. It succeeded in bringing a large number of Santals, Mundas, Koras, Mahatos, Sadgops, and even some Muslims and other Christian and non-Christian tribals into its fold. In West Bengal, its leadership was in the hands of non-Christian Santals. Only at Bhimpur the Christian tribals held their sway on this party. Many lower caste people of the locality also supported the Jharkhand Party. Sheer neglect of these people for centuries by the society and their deep-rooted poverty drove them into the arms of this tribal organisation.

But Mahato participation in the Jharkhand Party is a different story. It is said that the local Mahatos are more prosperous and scheming. They are local exploiters also. If the move against exploitation is taken up by the party, then they might be landed into a more complex situation. Hence, they extended their co-operation to this movement, as a planned subterfuge.

The Jharkhand Party got its support base in the tribe-inhabited areas. Its leaders mainly relied on the issue of resurgence of tribal culture. But economic and political issues were later tagged with this for the general uplift of these tribes and to make this movement popular and broad-based.

It is true that the tribals are economically hardpressed. Poverty is their daily friend. Exploiting their ignorance and natural simplicity, the traders and money lenders, made their lives miserable. Whatever small lands they had in their possession, passed on slowly to the money lenders, due to the tricky mechanism of money lending business. They groaned under agonising poverty and merciless exploitation for generations, and were frantically seeking an escape from this excruciating condition of living. As such, the hope of better economic condition attracted the tribals to join this party, which they considered to be their own.

The Weekly Paper named 'Debontingun', i.e. 'Let us stand', was published as an organ of the Jharkhand Party. The name was coined from a popular poem written by Ram Chand Murmu, who had a profound influence over the Santals through his writings. It is written in Santali language, in Bengali script. It focussed many problems of the tribals, and even outlined the area of proposed Jharkhand State. 'Jhar' means 'bushes', 'thickets', i.e. jungles. 'Khand' means 'region'—region of undulations. 'Jharkhand Ahala', i.e. origin of the move for Jharkhand describes in details, "This country is ours, it was full of jungles. We the autochthones group of people cleared the jungle and brought the land under cultivation and developed civilisation. We had our own administration, our capitals, towns and cities. The enemies have driven us here—they are trying to wipe out our name permanently. Some of our heroes of the past like Sidhu, Kanu, Birsu, tried to fight against this. We have forgotten those names". It also describes in poem :-

"You will not get such affectionate motherland, the land of the tribals.

Never, anywhere in this world.

It glitters like gold or silver.

It is a small world of ours.

It is inside India.

It is precious like copper, mercury or diamond."

Some of the lectures delivered by Sri Chittaranjan Maundl, Vice President of the State Jharkhand Party in this respect,

are worth mentioning. It frets and fumes against the *Dikus*, i.e. non-tribals. According to him, *Mahisasura* of Durga image of the Hindus is a representative of the tribals. His physical features are like the tribals—he is our representative. The Hindus have driven away and mercilessly killed our leaders, our men. Thus the '*Dikus*' not only exploited the tribals, but killed them ruthlessly. We, the tribal people, have now realised these historical events. So we have to challenge and reckon with our enemies. We must get back our land for our revitalisation for our normal growth. So we require Jharkhand for the growth of the tribals, who are down-trodden—who are exploited, who are decaying and dying."

Again the paper had written in a similar strain on many occasions, specially in its August issue (17th August, 1974)—"India is celebrating 15th August as the day of Independence. We have driven away the British rulers from this country about 27 years ago. What we have got? Nothing, not a place for our residence. We are not yet in a position to keep intact the lands which are in our possession. Are we in a position to save our religion? It can be said that Government has done nothing for us. The Europeans have taken away everything from the poor tribals. But our present Government has done nothing—even the *Khas* lands have not been given to us..... The Police are oppressing us hard. Though government has taken up many programmes for us, their benefits have not accrued to all. Considering all these, we say that 15th August is the day of sorrow".

It describes elsewhere :

"This Himalaya is on the north of our motherland; our Jharkhand is like a half-moon-crescent shaped; in which the river Jahnabi is flowing, and on the south the ocean is roaring. The sacred rivers Damodar and Mayurakshi are flowing within it. The Ajay, Silai, Brahmani and Kansabati are other rivulets, watering the land. The hill-Nilgiri in Orissa is another border of our land, which spreads upto Pareshnath—through Ranchi and Dumka ridges. This is our land. This was the land of the Independent Santal tribe."

The *Debontingun*, the Weekly Paper was priced 25 Paise per

issue, 1/4 crown size, having Regd. No. RN 13563/70, Regd. C-247, published from Prava Press, Jhargram, Printer Sri Dakhin Murmu of vill. and P. O. Ramgarh, Dist. Midnapur.

A good number of Adivasi candidates fought the 1967 election with the symbol of 'Jora Sakam', i.e. 'two leaves' as election symbol. The volunteers wore green caps as their party symbol. They had more campaigns and occasional meetings in many tribal lands, where they placed their election manifesto before the public. Some of the main aims of the party were —

- (1) A separate State within the framework of Indian Constitution for the tribal people to be named as 'Jharkhand State.'
- (2) Revival of tribal culture and introduction of tribal language in 'OI Chiki' script.
- (3) Opportunities for proper education of the tribal people.
- (4) Establishment of hospitals and Health Centres in the villages.
- (5) Right to exploit the forest area.
- (6) Employment opportunities including reservation of jobs for the tribal people on population basis.
- (7) Economic development of the people by setting up small scale and cottage industries in the areas inhabited by the tribal people.
- (8) Provide opportunities and facilities for agriculture and prevention of land alienation.
- (9) Improvement of village communication links and arrangement for supply of drinking water.
- (10) Facilities for technical education and providing new employment opportunities for the tribal people.....etc. etc.

The party took up politics as its weapon for furtherance of the above aims and made extensive use of folk-lore of tribal language during the period of election. In this General Election, though constituencies were redistributed, yet Sri Dakhin Murmu contested from Binpur (Midnapur), Sri Ratan Saren from Gopiballavpur (Midnapur), Dhiren Hemrom from Salbani (Midnapur), Babulal Saren from Raipur (Bankura), and another candidate from Bandown (Purulia). All of them were defeated.

In the mid-term election for West Bengal Legislative Assembly

in 1969, the party set up 10 candidates, but none was returned. But the party gained some importance in West Bengal after 1971 elections. The party contested as many as 22 seats and was able to secure 2 seats against the opposing parties. They fought this election with the 'Bow and Arrow' symbol, instead of the 'Cock or Two leaves'. They contested in the districts of Midnapur, Purulia, Bankura, Hooghly and Burdwan.

Shyamacharan Murmu (Binpur) and Babulal Soren (Raipur) were elected. In 1971, Sri Manoranjan Mahato contested in Jhargram constituency as a Jharkhand Party candidate. But in the 1972 election, the party was completely wiped out. 23 candidates contested on party tickets, but none was returned. For this election, new candidates were selected. In Jhargram constituency, Sm. Mrinalini Mahato—a school teacher of Ranarani school was selected as a party candidate and contested the election in place of Manoranjan Mahato, and Dakhin Babu contested in Jhargram Parliamentary constituency. Though the party adopted several new strategies and even cooperated with other political parties when necessary, without of course sacrificing their separate identity, they had to face a total rout. In this election they fought a losing battle.

On 30.6.73 the party organised mass squatting before Govt. offices in Jhargram and other sub-divisions in the district of Midnapur for 24 hours over various demands including recognition of 'Ol Chiki', restoration of lands to Adibasis which were allegedly taken from them by others by deceitful means, unemployment problems, distribution of Khas lands, protection against eviction of Bargadars, etc.

The party held a workers' conference at Jhargram town on 7.7.73 which was addressed by Bagum Samrui, President of All India Jharkhand Party and others. Bagum requested the party members and workers to work unitedly strengthening the party organisation in West Bengal.

The Purulia unit of the Jharkhand Party took up a programme of starting an agitational movement in the district from February 1974, but this did not materialise.

Recently, there were some differences of opinion amongst the party's rank and file in Bihar and as a result the party was divided into 3 groups—(1) Bagum Samrui group, (2) N.E.Hore group, and (3) Hul Jharkhand group. In West Bengal also the party was split into two parallel factions—one led by Dakhin Charan Murmu, President of the West Bengal unit, who owes allegiance to Begum Samrui group and the other led by Chittaranjan Mandi, Vice-President of the west Bengal unit, who lined up with Hul Jharkhand group (i.e. group led by Justin Richard). The split became final when at a meeting of the State Committee of the party held on 18. 1. 75 and 19. 1. 75 at Lalgeria, Dt. Midnapur, the group led by Chittaranjan Mandi staged a walkout from the meeting deciding to form a parallel organisation of the party. As a result no decision could be taken about holding the annual conference of the party.

Apart from the Jharkhand party there are some social organisations viz. Adibasi Santal Baishi (Congress sponsored), Adibasi Socio Educational and Cultural association and Santali Literary and Cultural Society. They also claim to be the champion of Adibasis. However these Associations could not unite together mainly due to difference of opinion as to adoption of script. Adibasi Santal Baishi and Adibasi Socio Educational and Cultural Society are in favour of 'Ol script', whereas the Santali Literary and Cultural Society is in favour of Roman script.

In West Bengal, Adibasi Socio Educational and Cultural Association is the most influential amongst Adibasis. The society organised two rallies during 1973. On February 26, 1973 a rally was held under the leadership of Joyram Murmu. They demanded recognition of 'Ol script' introduction of Santali language in all the educational institutions in West Bengal broadcasting of Santali programme through All India Radio. They submitted three memoranda to this effect to the Station Director, Akash Bani Calcutta, to the Chief Minister, West Bengal and to the Secretary to the Governor of West Bengal. Sri Joyram Murmu led another procession on September 12, 1973 to Esplanade Row, from where a deputation went

to the Station Director, Akash Bani and Writers' Buildings to hand over memoranda.

The organisation held cultural function styled as All India Adibasis Cultural function at Rabindra Sadan on April 13, 1973 where the Chief Minister of West Bengal attended.

It is reported that recently, a militant Organisation styled 'Jharkhand Mukti Morcha' comprising of hard-core elements of Adibasis under the leadership of Sibū Soren has been set up in Bihar. This Organisation, it is further reported, was responsible for some violent activities in Bihar during January '75 and is inclined to run a parallel Government in support of their agitation for a separate Jharkhand State. So far we have got no information that the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha has been able to establish any base in West Bengal to spread its activities here also.

Like all other political parties, the Jharkhand Party used to hold meetings at various places on different issues, specially before election. Sometimes the leaders and organisers of the party posed some of the burning problems of the tribes before the electorate and assured them to try to solve these, if they were elected. When it took out a procession, the members, specially the volunteers used to wear green caps and green shirts symbolising 'leaves'—'aspirations.' They used to sing many tribal songs with different tunes, from time to time to avoid monotony of a long march. They raised a variety of slogans, shouted first by the leaders of the procession, and then repeated by the processionists. This attracted the tribal people, as also the other castes and communities living in the area. Some of these songs are quoted below, both in the tribal dialect and in free English translation :—

- (i) Bharat reya bhag bata lada : lata : pata.
Jaypal Jhaptanda Jharkhand gata.

Free Translation

"Everybody is trying to divide India hurriedly ;
Jaypal (is) trying to have a full Jharkhand."

- (ii) Boybak dhir name hoho loga,
Duk reya dōy red dharam kele logo.

Free Translation :

"O brothers, we shall not stand inert,
We shall march ahead, through sufferings and honesty
to achieve our goal."

(iii) De dekha dahi dada
Ceban dar abon-diri-diri.
Dil dare daurate
Den dabon dakhal aa.

Free Translation :

"O brothers, let us go to occupy all waste lands. We have endless strength in our body. Let us go to occupy all waste lands. These should be in our possession."

A good number of songs were composed for this purpose, insisting on the tribals not to lie in slumber, assuring them that God was with them, and demanding that they must unite all the tribals for the sake of their own motherland—the State of Jharkhand. One of the songs cautioned them that they should not pay any importance to the opinion of the 'Dikus'—the non-tribals, who stood against their interest.

Some of them participated in the processions with drums, flags and sticks.

Some of the slogans raised by the processionists are quoted below to feed the interest of the readers. These are uttered loudly by the leaders of the procession, then repeated or replied to by others.

The leaders shout :

(i) Sidhukanu Birsa Bir
Reply in chorus : Ad baban taken thir.

Free Translation :

Q (Question) —Sidhu kanu (Santal heroes) and Birsa—
the hero (of the Mundas) ?

R (Reply) —They will not be in slumber.

The leaders ask—

(ii) Jharkhand Disam Akare ? "Where is Jharkhand" ?

R. It is within India. (Bharat Disam talare).

The leaders say—

(iii) Q. Ad baban batawaya ?

R. Jharkhand ban batywaya.

Free Taanslation :

Q. (We) must violate.

R. (We) must have Jhakhand.

The leaders blurt out—

Q. Ad baban batawaya

R. Ol Chiki ban chalaway.

Free Translation :

Q. We won't remain suppressed any more.

R. We (must) establish Ol Chiki (Santali script).

(v) The leaders command—

Q. Ol tom, parmi tom,

R. Urum tam, Urum tam.

Free Translation :

Q. Follow Ol Chiki, Accept Ol Chiki.

R. Follow Ol Chiki, follow Ol Chiki.

(vi) The leaders thunder out—

Q. Hariar Jhandi Jitkar.

R. Jitkar, Jitkar.

Free translation :

Q. (Our) green flag will be victorious.

R. Victory will be ours. Victory will be ours.

The above slogans are no doubt very sensitive and influence the mind of the people and many people including women and tender aged boys and girls spontaneously joined such processions and shouted accordingly.

The Jharkhand Party in West Bengal got its affiliation with the All India Party in 1965. Prior to that the tribals of this tract, specially in the western part of Midnapur, Bankura and Purulia were vacillating to other political parties, from time to time. It has been seen that the Congress had to lose seats in this area in many of the elections. The K. M. P., C. P. I. and Jharkhand parties came into power in 1967 elections in West Bengal, and in some other States which dealt a serious blow to the Congress. They established the United Front Ministry in West Bengal. This Ministry was later replaced

by the President's rule. Shortly after, the P. D. F. Ministry was formed with the support of the Congress, and later the Congress formed the Ministry with C. P. I. support. These successive changes and generally the chaotic conditions in the country at that time had a profound reaction among the general population.

Just after independence the independent candidates backed by the Adivasi Mahasabha got support from the Jan Sangh. But after the formation of the party on State level, they had to support the Congress for political reasons. They made this alliance with the Congress to combat C.P.I. and C.P.I. (M). But the Adivasi Mahasabha in Midnapur still exists as a non-political organisation, along with another such organisation (Sri Chinibas Murmu, a local physician is its leader) as mentioned earlier. But at the time of election, it was found that they backed some independent tribal candidates. This shows the prevalence of keen ethnocentrism among the tribals for fighting for their own community interest. This political trend has been noticed among the D.M.K. party of Tamilnadu.

This party, in course of their operations had however to face some tragic experiences. During the U.F. Ministry in West Bengal, the Jharkhand Party had several clashes, specially in connection with harvesting of crops. In Jamboni P. S. of Midnapur, there were serious clashes leading to death of some participants and lethal injuries to others. Curiously, the Police did not interfere and remained idle spectators. There were also troubles among the C.P.I. and C.P.M. in Naryangarh, Gopiballavpur and some other places. Some political parties are of opinion that they supported the landholders, and thus did harm to the poor peasantry, including the tribals. However, clashes were all associated with harvesting. The cultivators tried to take all the crops without giving any share to the owners or the land holders, ('Langal Jar—Dhan Tar', i.e. who has tilled the land will get the harvest). In

such a situation, the leaders of the Jharkhand Party protested. They said that the owner must not be deprived of his right, which according to Marxist supporters is entirely an untenable claim. Hence clashes continued to occur. The Marxists emphasised that these poor people are again being exploited, deprived in the name of 'Jharkhand'. They are not in a position to realise their minimum rights and dues from the society.

However, this sort of thinking and conflicts in the Jharkhand party created confusion and the party was divided in 1974, as stated earlier. Dakhin Babu claims that he is trying to keep the 'Adivasi vis-a-vis party image' intact, which according to him, should be the ideal. He still retains the affiliation of the local Unit with the All India party, and the dissidents Babulal Saren of Raipur (Bankura), along with Manoranjan Mahato of Jhargram, have formed a separate group. Dakhin Babu is also getting the support of an influential Mahato youngman of Jhargram in the efforts to counteract Monoranjan Babu.

Many of the leaders of the party are now either members or supporters of other political parties, or are living a life of retired political birds. Some again have confined themselves strictly to welfare activities.

Primarily the Jharkhand party wanted to have a separate State in India and according to some of the party leaders, it is still pursuing this aim. To strengthen this move and enlisting mass support, they are now demanding introduction of 'Ol Script' or 'Ol Chinki' for the tribal people. But due to present Emergency, they are not in a position to agitate or organise themselves in a better way, to press their demand. Most of these leaders hold the opinion that even the basic problems of the tribal people have not been solved, as yet, though the 20-point Economic Programme has been accepted by the Government for the overall development of the country.

It may be stated in this connection that the proposed Jharkhand State would have a good number of tribal popula-

tion, of whom the Santals constitute about 55%. The remaining 45% of tribal population are composed of Munda, Oraon, Bhumij, Mahal, Kora, Lodha, Savar, Kheria, and some other tribal groups, who differ from the above groups both culturally and on the basis of their economic pursuits. A good number of tribal communities, through gradual Hinduisation, have incorporated many of the dominant Hindu traits in their culture and are in a process of slow assimilation. The prominent among them are the Bhumij, Lodha and Savara groups of people who have formed a lower caste rung along the fringe of the Hindu caste hierarchy. The Mundas in places, have accepted *Alekh Dharam*, which is very akin to Hindu 'Bhakti Cult'. A section of the Santals in many places, specially in the district of Bankura, are known as 'Deswali Majhi', with whom the other groups of Santals have severed all connections, in course of conflicts among them on religious difference.

Very recently a new feeling of retribalisation has become dominant and the tribals are seeking their own distinct identity, specially the Santals, by adopting '*Saridharam*'. Again the Christian Santals are not in favour of 'Ol Chiki', rather they are in favour of 'Roman Script', which has been accepted by the Council of West Bengal Higher Secondary Education (1976). A good many Santals, along with others, are publishing books, journals and articles in Bengali Script (e. g. in *Pachchim Banga* published by the State Government), and in *Hariar Sakam* edited by Prof. S. K. Bhowmik. This led to confusion among the tribals who support introduction of 'Ol Chiki Script', which is not in accord with the ideals of the Jharkhand Party. This shows that the Santals are not supporting it. This can also be noticed from the election results, in which different parties got the support of the tribals. (Vide Appendix C).

The Jharkhand Party could not firmly spread its hold on the tribal population, as a whole, and therefore, this movement has fizzled out. Besides, the poor tribals and the lower caste peasantry are suffering, more or less, similarly and they consider political parties like, C.P.I. (M), instead of the Jharkhand

Party, as their representative, because they have pledged to fight against poverty, and also support their cause, from time to time. It has been further seen that the leadership of the Jharkhand Party was always held by a section of the educated and a bit better-off tribals, who are trying to raise and consolidate their position in the socio-political sphere of the region, neglecting altogether the lower and poorer groups. This is one of the main causes of losing support of the masses.

This so-called educated elite leadership has not been able to bring all the tribals together under a single organisation. for their narrow class interest and political inexperience. Besides, the heterogeneous tribal groups are not always inclined to coalesce with each other in a harmonious way to make a stronger party, and make a united demand for their causes. There are difficulties in forming such unity, as there are other socio-economic and psychological constraints. These have not yet been smoothened or dissolved. Besides, many other tribal groups say that most of the benefits extended to the tribals by the Government are meant for the Santals, and they are totally deprived. The koras, the Mundas, the Lodhas, the Kherias and the Mahalis of West Bengal are not getting the same opportunities. Thus such grievances and discontents still linger among the tribal communities.

By and large, the jerk of the Jharkhand Movement is no longer felt. Obviously there are some factors and forces responsible for creating this state of affairs.

APPENDIX 'A'

Office bearers (1965) of the West Bengal unit of the Jharkhand Party :—

1. Dakshin Charan Murmu —President
of Dhangori P. S. Binpur Dt. Midnapore.
2. Chittaranjan Mandi —Vice President
of Raghunathpur P. S. Binpur, Dt. Midnapore.
3. Chunaram Hansda —Secretary
of Gadra P.S. Binpur, Dt. Midnapore.
4. Sukhlal Baske of Pukharia —Treasurer
5. Babulal Soren —Member
of Kanssol P.S. Vishnupur, Dt. Bankura
6. Baneswar Murmu —Member
of Sankaria P.S. Raipur, Dt. Bankura
7. Mangal Hembram —Member
of Debpada P.S. Pandua, Dt. Hooghly.
8. Gumasta Prasad Soren —Member
of Kandkedi P.S. Bandwan, Dt. Purulia
9. Kanka Murmu —Member
of Kulti P.S. Kalna, Dt. Burdwan
10. Sripati Charan Murmu —Member
of Birbhanpur P.S. Salboni, Dt. Midnapore.
11. Hikim Murmu —Member
of Desvonda P.S. Binpur, Dt. Midnapore.
12. Dhuma Hansda —Member
of Kudchiboni P.S. Binpur, Dt. Midnapore.
13. Tanskrishna Murmu —Member
of Lakata P. S. Binpur, Dt. Midnapore.

APPENDIX 'B'
(Translation)

Election Manifesto of All India Jharkhand Party (West Bengal Branch) for the Mid-term Election. (1967)

Symbol—"Bow and Arrow"

The West Bengal Jharkhand Party is a branch of the All India Jharkhand Party (of which Sri Bagun Samrai is the President). So it fully supports the main aims and demands of the parent organisation.

The party believes in the ideals of democracy, socialism, nationalism and secularism as adopted in the Indian Constitution. It further believes that all persons have equal rights in the social, economic and political spheres. Although long 23 years have passed since the attainment of independence, no political party in India has shown any interest towards the problems of the tribal (Adibasi) or Scheduled Caste people, recognised, as such, in the Constitution, in spite of their full co-operation with the Administration and obedience to the country. A majority of such people live in the proposed Jharkhand State. These people are also linked with the rest of the population of this country by the tie of culture, language, economy and origin. The Jharkhand Party will fight hard for the attainment of security of life and realisation of equal constitutional, social and political rights for the people of Jharkhand.

But it is not a Communal Party. On the other hand, it will oppose all those parties, with all its might, which will directly or indirectly indulge in communalism, and thus degrade humanity. It believes that 'politics should serve the interest of man, and man should not be made the chess of politics'. But the existing political parties of India today are following such a derogatory policy, that by their action they are creating more suffering and misery for the people, and a condition in which the fundamental rights are at stake and the social and economic progress has suffered a set-back.

There is a state of calamity now. All over this land, the air is thick with the wailing of the stricken and hungry people.

Everybody is seeking an escape. There is a pervading despair. The traders feel puzzled, the farmers horrified, the unemployed and the labourers no not find any employment, the students misguided, in fact, the honour and life of man has become a mere play-thing.

The Jharkhand Party is greatly perplexed over all this. So they are determined to fight against such injustices and deprivation in all spheres and to realise the human rights for all, irrespective of caste or profession, to make this land a happy place to live in. Yet, the Jharkhand Party will create a new history for the mankind by its service and sacrifice."

This includes 29 specific demands, of which only 10 major demands have been included in the contents of this paper.

21. *A POLITICAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL VIEW OF THE WEST BENGAL STATE POLLS IN 1977.*

R. K. GUPTA & P. K. BHOWMICK

IT would be stating the obvious to say that political anthropology covers a large area of social anthropology. There can be no society without politics. Here a question may arise : What indeed is politics ? There are almost as many definitions as political scientists. But we shall humbly offer one : politics is the science of enforcement. For a society is a group of people governing the relationships amongst themselves by a set of rules. At the same time it has also to govern its relationship with other societies around it. The rules relating to such internal and external relationships have to be enforced—which is the *raison d'être* of politics. Text books show that political anthropology also is divided into schools of thought identical with those the social anthropologist is familiar with, the structuralist, the functionalist, etc. It can be easily explained that democratic elections are one of the means of enforcing such rules. Therefore, exercise of parliamentary democracy can be viewed from the standpoints of political anthropology. We have in this paper made an attempt to do so.

We have tried to view certain aspects of the State Assembly polls in 1977 in West Bengal first in a micro-study, followed by broader treatment of the related themes. Dr. P.K. Bhowmick, has naturally selected three constituencies of Midnapur, namely Satahata, Narayangarh and Binpur. Each of these Constituencies have around 1,50,000 voters. Brief geo-political notes on these areas are given below.

Sutahata Constituency is predominantly inhabited by the two Castes, the Mahishyas and the Paundras. In the hierarchical caste society of Hindu Bengal, these two happen to be powerful middle castes. This group of middle castes are called the Nine Branches (the Nava-Sakh). O'malley enumerates eleven as the middle castes, but the two extra branches are probably sub-castes. The rise in material power of the middle castes all over India is a significant sociological fact. It probably started with the state action against revenue intermediaries like the zemindars and the (Oudh) Talukdars. The change can be clearly demonstrated in West Bengal where the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act was passed in 1955. But social anthropologists will do well to investigate this trend in the other socio-economic/cultural regions like Bihar/Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Western Uttar Pradesh/Haryana. It looks as if for comparable reasons the middle castes in these areas also have climbed high in material and social power. One may therefore say the powercentre has moved down the hierarchy to the middle.

In the Southern parts of India the shift had started earlier; the Justice Party had been organised by the non-Brahmins to wrest power from the Brahmin elite largely backed by the British, as the Muslim League was politically backed in the north. After independence the Justice Party understandably withered away but came in its place the DMK based on the arithmetic of elections; the Brahmin cultural and bureaucratic power in consequence was overthrown. The Gounder's coming into power has been well described by Beteille; be it noted that this change in social power in the South was not caused by the abolition of zemindari, the Iyengars and Iyers were not the landed rich, but in the north the makers of the Jajmani system were.

Anyway, this was the socio-hierarchical power-base in Sutahata and Narayangarh; Binpur was slightly different and will be discussed latter. Sutahata had from the point of view of human ecology other historical factors to consider. It is in human geography an extension of the ancient Tamralipti, the great port for the entire hinterland of the sub-continental east. This port

also served the massive traffic of Asian South East and might have contributed to the flow of Indian culture to Burma, Thailand and Indonesia, and to the flowering in this region of the Shailendra culture. Even now the proletariat is mobile and maritime, many operate the continuous traffic between Suta-hata and the agrarian areas of the Sunderbans. A number of fishing communities also live here, in fair weather they sail deep into the Bay trawling for fish. These factors have made the communities of Suta-hata receptive to new ideas and innovations. The concept of freedom from British rule and of a struggle for it fell on fertile grounds in Suta-hata. The Indian National Congress started growing here from the early twenties of Gandhian Non-Cooperation. Early in the thirties there was here another massive Gandhian movement. But it is only in the 1942 phase of the struggle that the freedom movement here reached its highest peak. The British Government tried their best here with severe laws and punitive fines enforced by the Army and a vastly augmented police force. The freedom fighters retaliated by guerilla forces like "Vidyut Vahini" and "Gram Dal" and for sometime a "parallel" government functioned here in defiance of British. The anti-establishment spirit continued after the Independence in the shape of Communist movement. Till 1977, the Communist Party of India and its more extreme sister party, Communist Party of India (Marxist) were the only opposition to the Congress Party in West Bengal, which until 1977 was the Establishment in the country.

Narayangarh has a different human ecology, here there is a stronger percentage of scheduled castes. It is placed deep in the interior of the very large district of Midnapore and should ordinarily have been "benighted". The fact however is that the great trunk road to Puri goes through this area; for centuries, thousands of pilgrims from all parts of Northern India have travelled along this wide tree-shaded road. This has not been merely a path of pilgrimage but also in commerce, in culture. Apart from that, this area has been like Jhelum in Punjab, a corridor of invasion between the North and the South of India. And invasions in India have promoted demo-

graphic admixture, acculturation, and mobility of communities. These factors have made the communities of Narayangarh also culturally receptive. Earlier in Satahata, a base of violent struggle for freedom was laid here by Barin Ghosh, Hem Kanungo, etc. But the large number of the scheduled castes and the Adibasis here were a liability from this point of view; even after 1947 left movement in this Constituency did not make much head way.

Recent excavations in the neighbourhood have indicated that Binpur on the fringe of Gondwana may be a paradise for palaeo anthropologists. Enquiries also suggest that Applied Anthropologists have here a fertile field of work. Demographically this is an area mainly inhabited by Adibasis, and lower caste Hindus the few high caste Hindus there are the immigrant exploiters. Politically this area was on the fringe of the broad sweep of the Bhonsle's troops in Orissa and the southern parts of Midnapur. Earlier in history the Pathans had carved out their Sultanate of Orrissa—Midnapur. Man Singh as Akbar's Commander, annexed it to the Mughal Empire. With the Pathans, and also with Man Singh, came a number of the members of the warrior caste, not necessarily professionally highly ranked, but mainly military adventurers fighting on hire. This had an effect of conductivity on the local autochthons, the politically powerful amongst them became Rajputised or Kshatriyanised (as Dr. Sinha has described). Such Kshatriyanisation is merely a mode of Hindu proseletysation as M. N. Srinivas had described; a mode of finding an attractive place for suitable Adivasi Chieftains in the Varnasram hierarchy. Politically, Binpur was obviously a part of the area over-run by the Bhonsle and later annexed by the British in the Mahratta war. What remains unrecorded is the decline and fall of the Santal Political power, which today can be reconstructed only by a close study of the tribal legends and myths and songs. It is more than possible that this area was a part of Bengal which was governed in a feudal manner before and after the permanent settlement was introduced; it may have taken the British the major part of the 19th

Century to integrate Binpur with the rest of the province in administration. An important difference between and the other two areas studied by us in this paper must be emphasised here. Binpur in the matter of human and ideological traffic remained land locked and backward. The main stream of freedom struggle passed by it, only after the Independence we had here some ripples of the retribalisation movement known as the Jharkhand movement. And although ethnic and agricultural exploitation in this area has been extreme, left movements have not been strong here. Even the Naxalite movement left it untouched, except that a few remote villages were probably used by the Naxalites as underground base. The Communist movement in Bengal have usually been led by what Broomfield and Seal call the traditional Bhadrak class (we prefer to call them "the displaced gentry"). Such people were, to the tribals the not-very well-liked "Dikus," and hence their leadership was blocked by ethnological barriers.

Such was the ethnology of the areas in which we propose to study the State polls of 1977. In India the Congress has been the dominant party since 1947; in and after the sixties, some State Governments were won by other parties, both of the Right and the Left. But the Central Government was always the preserve of the Congress Party. This came to end in March 1977 when a conglomeration of anti-Congress parties called Janata defeated the Congress led by Indira Gandhi. At the State polls which followed, the Congress Rule since 1972 was overthrown by the CPI (M) led Left Front. In the key states around Delhi the anti-Congress prlitical reaction was obviously caused by the excesses and the errors of the Emergency. But in West Bengal the Emergency was never rigorously enforced or acutely felt. Therefore it will be simplistic to argue that the Emergency made the Congress unpopular, and helped the Left front take-over of the Government. There are other factors which it will be our task to identify in this essay.

It is almost a truism of the Indian Political scene that lower down one goes towards the ground level affairs, more important becomes the role of personality, family background, moral

reputation etc. It would seem the macro-level contrary forces of political ideology are more powerful, at least in West Bengal. This a contention we shall study later. Here for our micro-studies we have taken the poll-results of three constituencies we have just examined ethnologically.

It should be noted that the three constituencies returned MLAs from different parties, a fact which adds to the value of the micro-studies. Let us take the candidate individually. Satahata is a constituency dominated by Mahishyas and Paundra communities. The successful candidate Sri Sibnath Das (Janata) is a young man who has been to the University, and of the Paundra caste. Das has a political background. He belongs to an affluent family, and his father had taken part in the freedom struggle. Sri Lakshman Chandra Seth (CPI-M), a close second in polling, belongs to the Washerman community and is an M. A. He had a background of work amongst the workers of the Haldia port, and also amongst the rural peasantry, displaced by the Haldia complex. Sri Narendra Nath Patra (Congress) is a Paundra, a school teacher, and respected for his manners and character. He however had no record of political work. Sri BidhuBhushan Karan (CPI) polled his caste and party votes, which were far from enough. The defeat of Sri Harihar Dev, a paundra, is significant. He was once a Congress MLA and had done much political and social work in the past. It shows that even at the ground level a politically suitable man needs a standard to carry, even in the village communities the party-less democracy is at the present moment a chimera. This is a theme which we shall develop in another essay: how far has Karl Marx's Indian Village communities or Sarat Chandra's Palli-Samaj have become politicised.

Narayangarh elected a Congress MLA, Sri Krishnadas Roy, the head master of a Madhyamick School. He is a Kayastha, and has a helpful family background. His father had taken, during the freedom struggle, a leading part. Later in the post-Independence era he played an active and useful role in Congress politics, and as a member of local and district bodies. Krishnadas had won the election from this very constituency on a Congress ticket, but lost it again to a Bangla Congress (a

rebel group) candidate called Mihir Laha. Laha is very popular in the constituency but he does not "belong". He is of Calcutta and belongs to a very rich Vaishya family. But Suryakanta Mishra, who also was within the striking distance victory, and a CPI- Candidate, is an M.B.B.S. Doctor in the area and with a strong hold of the locality. He belongs to an Orissa Brahmin family. Other candidates, including the one from the CPI, are "qualified" in the ordinary sense of the term—but politically without much background.

Binpur is a scheduled tribe constituency which returned a CPI-M MLA—Dr. Sambhunath Mandi. He is a Veterinary Surgeon and a Santal. All other candidates were also Santals. Dr. Mandi, who is now a State Minister for Tribal Welfare, has a maternal uncle—Sri Jadunath Kisku, who is an M. P. Thus he has a political family background—and even when a student he used to take part in politics. Sri Dakhin Murmu, who is an M. Sc. in Agriculture, a close second in the poll, was significantly enough the president of the State Jharkhand Party—and now contesting the polls on Janata ticket. He has a long political past. He contested several election previously but won none. He has the reputation of a hard working honest man. Though he was never elected, his great contribution to the victory of other Jharkhand candidates in the past is admitted by all. At these polls he joined the Janata Party. The Congress candidate, a close third, Panchanan Hansda fought his first electoral battle on this occasion and did well. Shyam-charan Murmu was a Jharkhand Candidate, but contested on an independant ticket and did very well. The CPI Candidate Jayaram Saren is known here for his political sincerity and did not do badly.

We would like to record here the actual voting, and offer our comments.

TABLE 1.
Candidates and the Election Results

S. N.	Constituency	Candidate	Party	Vote secured
1	2	3	4	5
1	Sutahata (Sch. Caste)	1 Sibnath Das	Janata	20,842
		2 Narendranath Patra	Congress	8,623
		3 Bidhubhusan Karan	C. P. I.	6,342
		4 Lakshman Ch. Seth	CPI-M	19,151
		5 Hari Hara Dev	Ind.	265
2	Narayangarh (General)	1 Krishnadas Roy	Congress	13,772
		2 Anil K. Rai Mahapatra	Ind	772
		3 Panchanan Pradhan	Ind	3,719
		4 Ambuj Mahapatra	C. P. I.	5,186
		5 Mihir Laha	Janata	12,613
		6 Surja Kanta Mishra	CPI-M	12,343
3	Binpur (Sch. Tribe)	1 Sambhunath Mandi	CPI-M	11,471
		2 Jayram Saren	C. P. I.	5,909
		3 Dakhin Murmu	Janata	9,920
		4 Panchanan Hansda	Congress	8,548
		5 Shyama Charan Murmu	Ind	3,984
		6 Surjakanta Murmu	Ind	161

Before we can generalise we should point out that :

- (1) In Sutahata constituency there is a base of hierarchical equality, except that the CPI (M) Candidate is a washerman by caste, which is lower than Paundra—Mahishya middle caste level. But there is certainly stratified inequality, Sutahata in this respect is a part of Agrarian West Bengal.
- (2) In Narayangarh constituency there is both hierarchical and stratified inequality.
- (3) In Binpur constituency one may say there is, by and large, both hierarchical and stratified equality.

Another point to note : the polls in 1977 might have been slightly tipped against the Congress because of the Emergency and the excesses committed during the period. Even if West Bengal did not see many excess press censorship led to rumours which have adversely affected the elite opinion in Rural West Bengal. The Political Anthropologist should take note of the multiplier effect in such from of election—and the reverse effect. In other words, in elections in which parties group to contest, or

parties before contest get divided, the votes polled by candidate are not in direct proportion to the strength of the individual parties concerned. In these particular polls we may argue that the CPI-M benefited by forming the Left Front, the multiplier worked in its favour. Similarly, both the Congress and the Janata suffered for they divided a common pool of voters. Again, the CPI-M cadres took the polls in their stride. They had gathered great confidence in their earlier success in alliance with the Janata Party in the Parliamentary elections held in March. Since the fall of the U. F. Government the CPI-M leadership had preserved their cadres with great care for about seven years of what one may call "exile". This required on the part of the leadership absolute control, for a kind of "Underground" was created by transfer—the cadres from one region to another—often a distant one. This also required on the part of the cadres great loyalty and discipline, for it frequently involved hardship. What may have helped the cohesion among the CPI-M cadres is the constant threat from politically hostile parties like the Congress and the Naxalites. When the Congress Government decided to go to the polls these party cadres came out in full strength and swept the Congress out of the State representation as the Parliament. The State pools were contested by the CPI-M as the spearhead of a Left Front—and against the Janata and the Congress candidates. Organisationally the Congress Party was on paper the strongest. In any case in these three constituencies this party had the strongest net work, spread in some areas to the Block and the Anchal levels, and certainly a larger number of "Canvassers" and "Volunteers". But this was only on paper. In actual fact the party was split into two warring factions, one led by Sri Siddhartha Shankar Ray, the Congress Chief Minister and the other by his Irrigation Minister, Sri Barkat Ghani Khan Chowdhury. This undermined the party moral so much that the Chief Minister himself did not have enough courage to offer himself for election to the Assembly. The Janata was a conglomeration of the Congress (O), the Socialist Party and the erstwhile Congress, like the Bangla Congress. Only the opposition against the Congress was the cohering

bond among these groups. The CPI-M, after emerging from their self-imposed "oblivion" revived in no time the old party network in these three Constituencies; the party was united and disciplined. Interestingly enough in all these three constituencies, at these polls in 1977, the parties did not depend on large scale meetings and processions. Rather each party depended more on small meetings, individual approach and less vituperative slogans than before. Our enquiries show that the following slogans, mentioned below, party by party, were very common :

- (1) For the Congress : "Bande Mataram"
(I salute thee, Motherland)
"Gai Bachhure' Bhot Din"
(Vote for the symbol of Cow and Calf).
"Khuner rakte ranga karle kara ?"
Khuni CPM, abar kara ?"
(Who have made things red with bloody murder?
The murdering CPM, who else ?)
- (2) For the CPI "Inqlad Zindabad"
(Long live the Revolution)
"Vote diben kishe ?"
Kaste Dhaner Shishe"
(Which ballot box will you cast your vote in ?
In that one marked with scythe and paddy ear)
- (3) For the CPI-M "Inqlab Zindabad"
(Long live the Revolution)
"Garibke Marlo Kara ?"
Congressira, abar kara ?"
(Who killed the poor ?
They are the Congressmen, who else ?)
"Dilli theke elo gai"
(A cow has come from Delhi)
"Ganatantra Hatyakari Congress Nipat Jak"
(Down with the Congress, the killer of democracy)
- (4) For the Janata "Bande Mataram"
(I salute thee, Motherland)
"Deshke Jaiikhanai Parinato Karache ke ?"

"... Indira Sarkar, abar ke ?"

(Who has turned the whole country into a jail ?)

It is the Indira Government, who else ?)

These slogans indicate a polarisation, an illusory polarisation at the level of political parties. Both the left parties are propagating the revolution, at least in slogans; the parties of the Centre or the Right are not significantly attacking each other, the Janata attack Indira, not the Congress party, the Congress attack CPI(M) not the Janata. We shall consider later why we consider such polarisation illusory.

Through wall writings also massive campaign was unleashed. (This is a technique which became increasingly prominent since the sixties.) The wall writings often took the form of popular doggerels and locally scurrilous issues, sometimes on the lines of the rural "Kabir Larai" (slanging matches in rhyme). The combination of opposites is therefore as follows :

1. Spoken words in slogans on the broad plane of politics.
2. Written words on walls on the plane of narrow local and personal issues (origin of wall writing from the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the late sixties).

Some specimens of wall writing are quoted below :

- (1) Takdum Takdum Takdum baje, baje dhakeo khole.

June maser choddo tarikhe

Pabi tora gol.

'Listen to the beat of drum announcing that on
the 14th

June' you (the Congress) will get zero."

- (2) Gai bachhurer natun neta Indu Utthasini ;

Thanai gia ghush jogai

Dibasa rajani.

"The new leader of the party with the cow and calf symbol is Indu Utthasini.

He is a procurer of bribe for the Police

On a twentyfour hour basis."

(Indu Utthasini is a local Congress leader and the President of the Thana Committee).

A Political Anthropological view of West Bengal

The Congress reports.

- (1) Mao-Tse Tung Jader Neta
Swarga Jader China.
Tarai Abar Bhot Prarthi
Sunun Tader Baina.

"Those who regard Mao-Tse Tung as their leader, and China as their paradise, also now ask for votes, look at their cheek".

- (2) CPI-M er tin goon,
loot, danga, manush-khun
"CPI-M have three qualities,
they loot, they riot and murder people."

The CPI-M swings back again in aggressive rhyme.

- (1) Sangramer ekti dhap
Kaste—Haturi—Tarai chhap.
"One phase in our struggle is your vote
for the symbol of sickle, hammer and star"
- (2) Jegeche Sramik, jegeche Krishak, jegeche Sarbahara,
Nirbachane bijoyee habe, Kaste-Haturi-Tara.
"The toilers, the peasants and the proletariat have
all awakened,
and (in consequence) the winners at the polls
will be the party with the symbol of
the sickle, the hammer and the star".

In spite of this struggle the political polarisation did not take place at the level of voters, the electorate. Seventy percent of the people of West Bengal are considered to be below "the poverty line". According to the 1971 census about 3.3 million in the agrarian sector were landless, the figure must now be much larger. There is also no doubt that the big land owners (known in West Bengal as Jotedars) either supported the Congress or the Janata. And we find that

- (1) In Sutahata the total number of votes cast in favour of the Congress and the Janata together was 29465 as against 19151 votes cast in favour of CPI-M. The Janata victor



at the polls, Sri Shibnath Das. belonged to an affluent family.

- (2) In Narayangarh the total number of votes cast for the Congress and the Janata together were 26385, whereas CPI-M polled 12343 votes. In this constituency also the successful candidate Sri Krishnadas Roy belongs to what one may term as a "middle class" family.
- (3) In Binpur the total number of votes polled for the Congress and the Janata together were 18468 as against 11417 cast in favour of CPI-M. Here the CPI-M candidate won mainly because the Jotedar's votes were split due to the clash between Congress and Janata.

What was the reason for the rural poor not voting for the CPI-M who certainly have done much more for them than the Jotedars ?

We would like to refer the explanation put forward in Gupta's recently published book—"Agrarian West Bengal : Three Field Studies". Here Gupta has argued :

- (1) There is in Agrarian West Bengal a semi-feudal condition in which bonded labour is common. In such a situation economy is semi-monetised, and so are the agrarian wages.
- (2) The big land owners (Jotedars) and rich farmers would not take advantage of credit and technological progress to spear-head an agricultural break through. Such a break-through would remove poverty, the semi-feudal condition and bondage. The Jotedars and the rich farmers owning the means of production had power amidst poverty ; general poverty promoted their power.
- (3) Through the exercise of economic power the Jotedars and the rich farmers, constituting the rural power structure, continued to be in socio-economic power, whatever the composition of the Central or the State Governments might be. This would explain the voting paradox we have observed in Satahata, Narayangarh and Binpur.

In the same volume Gupta offered a solution—the solution of cluster farming. The object of such farming was to :

- (1) Spear-head the Green Revolution with Rural Poor.
- (2) And in order to do so organise middle peasant, the poor peasant and the share-cropper with status and scale which are required for the break-through, and
- (3) Organise the landless worker in the same co-operative along with the land owning farmers (middle and poor peasantry and the share croppers).
- (4) And this would give to the poor an increasing ownership of the means of production in Agrarian West Bengal. What was implicit in the scheme for cluster farming is that the rural poor would thus also attain political freedom which should be exercised for owning in a greater measure, and ultimate means of production in the Agrarian areas.

The point of this scheme was to create the economic situation for a socialist-take-over of power. The Left Front Government have chosen a shorter cut to power—through the Panchayat elections. The poll results indicated for the CPI-M's decisive victory.

Rural Power Structure cannot have been broken. In the last one year the Left Front Government have been in power.

- (1) Though there has been some "Food for Work" it certainly has not been an adequate substitute for the Jotedar's rural credit.
- (2) Even now it has not been possible to enforce the minimum agricultural wage in major areas of the state.
- (3) The statutory bargadar's share has not been effectively available everywhere. On the other hand :
 - (1) The left, particularly the CPI-M organisation has been gathering strength everywhere.
 - (2) Such organisations have given the bargadar and the poor peasantry a fairer deal, everywhere. And the Rural Power Structure has been politically weakened, though the economic bondage of the poor peasantry, the share croppers and the landless agrarian workers continues. The Jotedars and rich farmers are politically weakened for their parties are in political disarray.

The Congress party has been badly splintered. In the panchayet elections the Rural power Structure was divided against itself in four groups : the Congress (I), the Congress (R), the Janata and numbers Independents.

Therein lies the explanation of the political paradox ; the existence of the Rural power Structure and the sweeping electoral victory of the Left forces in the Agrarian West Bengal. We have seen that the poor peasantry (along with the share croppers, landless workers and the middle peasantry) have not been organised as much as they should be against the political wings of the Rural power Structure, namely the Congress and the Janata. In other words the polarisation of voters have not taken place. In consequence the Left Parties got fewer votes than they did. What was however decisively in their favour is that the Left and the Right political parties also have not really been polarised. Had they been, then the Left Front would have been electorally confronted by a Right Front and the Rural power Structure would have retained political power, both in the State and the Panchayet elections. So far as the CPI-M are concerned their thesis of non-polarisation of parties is deliberate. Through the political in-fighting inside the ruling class parties alone the Left parties can thrive and progress in the bourgeois democratic electoral set up.

There is another and supplementary explanation for the CPI-M victory in the Panchayet elections. It is true that the split in the Left Front in the Panchayet polls reduced the multiplier. On the other hand with the growth of the CPI-M, the multiplier value lost through erosion. What may have to the CPI-M a source of strength is the large band of fence-sitters who may have swelled the ranks of CPI-M supporters at the panchayet polls. We have seen such opportunism in the Trade Unions in recent political history. The Congress victory at the polls in 1972 brought the I.N.T.U.C. and the N.L.C.C. to the fore, and the C.I.T.U. Unions faded out temporarily. The same Unions swung overnight to the C.I.T.U. with the Left Front victory in 1977. The opportunists in the Trade Union arena only added to the practice of economism. It is far from clear to us yet that the elements of opportunists in the Panchayets

will be effective weapons for economic liberation and progress. But before we come to any firm conclusion on this point, more post Panchayet election field studies are necessary, or else we shall be generalising on mere guess work. The major question will remain unanswered now. What is the class content of CPI (M) now? Will this party in rural areas be spear-headed by the middle peasantry towards radicalism?

We now wish to take a micro-view of 1977 State elections. Making abroad assessment of the results which emerged we are inclined to be optimistic about the electorate in West-Bengal. Generally speaking the adult franchise democracy in India can be faulted on the following points :

- (1) Communal voting : Apart from the two major communities, the Hindus and the Muslims, there are other communities, like Sikhs and Christians. Such communal factors play a big part in the polls.
- (2) Caste based voting : this is a far more significant factor. In India the stratified situation is aggravated by the caste hierarchy. In many areas particular castes, low or middle, dominate. Usually candidates of such castes are chosen by the contending political parties. In Punjab a Ramgarhia Sikh has very little chance in a predominantly Jat Constituency. In India every community is caste-ridden, more or less. In a predominantly Muslim Constituency also, caste, we suppose, will be a factor at the polls.
- (3) Unfree polls, when voters are under coercion, rigging of polls which have been so common in the sub-continent has been prominent since the early seventies. Such rigging is possible mainly with State support. There can also be coercive violence, we have in some rigged elections known of an entire mahalla coerced by hoodlums into not voting, while their votes were cast by proxy. Then we have instance of unseen coercion of the Rural Power Structure. The partially free agricultural worker depending on the Jotedar's crop loan is unlikely to vote freely ; we have observed the consequences in the Assembly polls in the Midnapore Constituencies we have studied.

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is more political than in other States in the country. Two points may be noted : while the predominately Muslim Constituencies have been returning Muslim Candidates, the situation is not entirely communal. The average of Muslim MLAs returned in 1977 from predominantly Hindu Constituencies works out at 13.6. Equally notably, the average of Hindu MLAs returned in the same polls from the predominantly Muslim constituencies works out at 8.2. It is however notable that taking all the elections from 1967 to 1977 (5 in all), the highest number of Muslim MLAs coincided with the most spectacular Congress victory of 1972. And, in contrast, the lowest number of Muslim MLAs were returned in the sweeping Left victory of 1977. It should also be noted that the predominantly Muslim communities have returned the largest number of Hindu MLAs in 1977, and the predominantly Hindu Constituencies have returned the largest number of Muslim MLAs in 1972.

In order to examine the influence of casteism on West Bengal politics, we examined the polls of Midnapore district, large portions of which have a predominant majority of Mahishya caste. For the same reason we examined the voting pattern in the district of Burdwan also, where the dominant community is Ugrakshatriya. Our studies resulted in the very significant conclusion that casteism by and large did not influence political poll verdicts. In Midnapur out of 37 MLAs 15 were of the Mahishya. In Burdwan out of 26 MLAs 5 alone were of the Ugrakshatriya caste. Let us explain here that the Mahishya and the Ugrakshatriya are two dominant groups in the cluster of middle castes in West Bengal. Interestingly enough, both the landed gentry and the landless, in these two districts, are either Mahishyas or Ugrakshatriyas.

Let us also study the election figures. It will be noted that in the State polls two major parties as the main competitors until 1977, CPI-M and the Congress. To this extent the electoral situation was structurally polarised—but there we have to stop. We find that polarisation was incomplete, never did an absolutely Right Front oppose an absolutely Left Front. The Congress and CPI-M gained or lost through the multiplier effect

due to shuttling between Fronts of parties like CPI and the Bangla Congress. In 1977, both at the Parliamentary and the State polls polarisation was further confused and weakened by the emergence of the Janata Party. We may however note that the percentage of votes in favour of CPI-M has steadily increased since 1967 :

1967—18.11%
1969—19.97%
1971—31.98%
1972—27.14%
1977—35.21%

This table will show that the percentage of votes in favour of CPI-M has not borne any proportion to their number of seats in the Assembly. Nor is the voting percentage in any way related to the Congress strength in the Assembly either. But the percentage has violently oscillated due to lack of Right consolidation in 1971 and 1977 :

1971—41.13%
1969—41.32%
1971—28.20%
1972—47.52%
1977—22.53%

In 1971 Congress (O) cut into the votes commanded by the Rural Power Structure. In 1977 the Janata Party, of which Congress (O) was a constituent, performed the same role more disastrously for the Rural Power Structure. In 1967 the emergence of the Bangla Congress initially marked the process of non-polarisation ; that was the first year in which the Rural power Structure lost out to the Left. We thus get a picture of polls, less influenced by non-political (like community, caste etc.) factors. But there have been occasion in which the State power has been used to coerce voters. And we should also record in conclusion that while caste and community factors are weaker in this State, they are not totally absent. But at its own level Rural Power Structure can harness these factors to its advantage.

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